

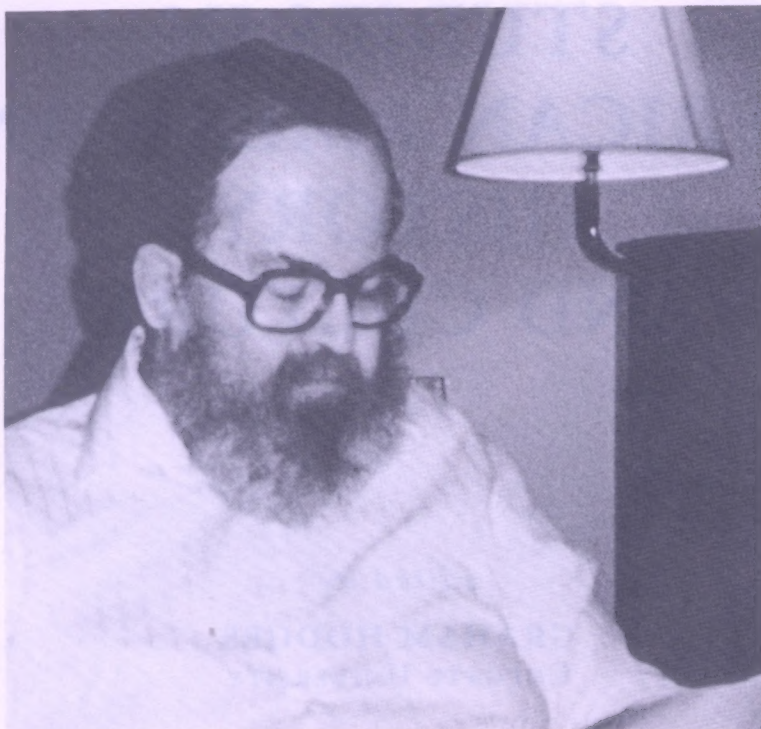


# STUDIES IN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

*edited by*

GRAHAM HODGES  
COLGATE UNIVERSITY

A GARLAND SERIES



**Hugo Prosper Leaming**

*Courtesy of All Souls First Universalist Society of Chicago.*

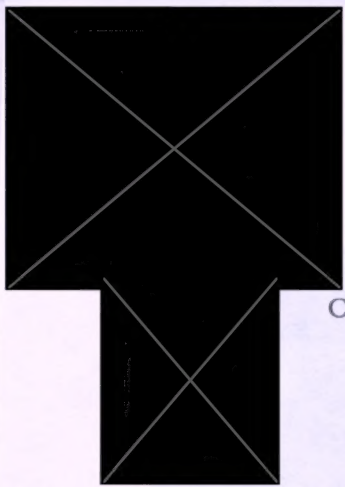


# HIDDEN AMERICANS

## MAROONS OF VIRGINIA AND THE CAROLINAS

HUGO PROSPER LEAMING

GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC.  
NEW YORK & LONDON / 1995



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leaming, Hugo Prosper.

Hidden Americans : maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas / Hugo Prosper Leaming.

p. cm. — (Studies in African American history and culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8153-1543-0

1. Maroons—Virginia—History. 2. Maroons—North Carolina—History. 3. Maroons—South Carolina—History. 4. Fugitive slaves—Virginia—History. 5. Fugitive slaves—North Carolina—History. 6. Fugitive slaves—South Carolina—History. 7. Virginia—Race relations. 8. North Carolina—Race relations. 9. South Carolina—Race relations. I. Title. II. Series.

E450.L39 1995

975.5'00496073—dc20

94-34177

CIP

Printed on acid-free, 250-year-life paper  
Manufactured in the United States of America



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## Editor's Introduction

Maroons, bands of fugitive slaves living independently from society, remain a controversial subject among North American historians. An accepted part of West Indian and South American historiography, maroons pose special difficulties for students of North American slavery. Though the power of paternalism to explain slavery has lately waned, scholarly study of black enslavement within the present limits of the United States rarely contends that African American fugitives were capable of independent existence. Fewer still would argue that escaped slaves were able to mount significant military opposition to the slavocracy, though recent work on the American Revolution has upgraded the image of slaves as soldiers.<sup>1</sup> A two-century tradition of armed resistance, replete with military and political leaders, bolstered by a powerful Pentecostal faith, would be far beyond the recognition of most scholars. Yet those components are what Hugo Prosper Leaming presents in his remarkable study of maroon traditions in the Dismal Swamp of North Carolina. Publication of this unique investigation, first presented in a dissertation in 1979 and now reprinted in this posthumous edition, greatly advances our understanding of the importance of maroons as alternatives to slave society in early America.

Leaming spells out the ramifications of his carefully researched narrative of maroon history and life in the Dismal Swamps of North Carolina and Virginia in the introduction to this work. Calling his study a contribution to the history of maroons in the Western Hemisphere, Leaming perceives broad similarities between American maroons and more well-known groups in the West Indies and South America. Like their southern counterparts, Dismal Swamp maroons uncovered and adapted to natural sanctuaries, created long lasting communities and shared heritage, sustaining a new and distinctive culture, defended by small scale guerrilla raids and on occasion full scale maroon warfare.

This is not a history derived from his imagination. Leaming's study is vigorously anchored by extensive research in Carolina imperial history, by assiduous reading of secondary texts, and, most usefully,

extensive searches into local history. While North Carolina's history lacks the extensive scholarly debate which characterizes Virginia and South Carolina, it makes up for this neglect by a thick underbrush of local historiography, from which Leaming plucks important evidence.

In the first section Leaming produces an answer to the missing colony of Roanoke, thought lost to English imperial power after 1588. The people of Roanoke, Leaming explains, did not starve or suffer massacre. Rather they blended into a branch of the Tuscarora nation, creating along with African Americans, left from earlier Spanish forays, and Native Americans, an independent society. At first composed largely of forest people, later Roanoke attracted radical Quakers and fugitive indentured servants from Virginia and South Carolina who were at first resistant to imperial power. In the next half century the Roanoke society controlled the legislature of Albemarle, later North Carolina, creating a highly atypical colonial relationship with the Tory government in London. Roanoke met disastrous defeats in the early eighteenth century, as its vision of American society was replaced by the slavery plantation models of Virginia and South Carolina. In response, elements of Roanoke society combined with fugitive African Americans populated the Dismal Swamp. Together with the Tuscarora Nation, this new society became the Scratch Hall folk, who led guerrilla operations against the plantation system throughout the pre-revolutionary period.

At the outset of the American Revolution the Scratch Hall folk quickly responded to Virginia Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore, who offered by proclamation, liberty to all indented servants and slaves willing to help put down the "horrid rebellion" against His Majesty. Dunmore's dreams of an Ethiopian Regiment faltered in defeat in the battle of Norfolk in early 1776. Still, Scratch Hall folk joined other African Americans seeking freedom behind the British lines. In the aftermath of the war, maroon bands proliferated in North and South Carolina into the 1790s and in Florida, into the late 1820s.

Subsequently, during the eras of Peter II and Robert Ferebee, links in a chain of Kings and Queens, and who served as military and spiritual leaders of the maroons, the people of the Dismal Swamp conducted guerrilla actions into other regions. After Nat Turner's failed revolt in 1831, slave owners sustained safety zones which curtailed maroon forays. This tactic worked until the era of Osman (1852-1862), when the Swamps filled with runaway slaves. As the Civil War commenced, maroons waited until President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation before making a military alliance with the United States against the Confederacy. They joined volunteer units and also formed the famous Buffalo Soldiers, who controlled



surrounding counties during the conflict. After the war the last paramount chief became the first black American political boss of Virginia republicans. Freed of the worries of enslavement, maroons dissolved their community and joined the general African American community. Subsequent chapters add fascinating detail about the creation of maroon culture and religion. In the last two chapters, Leaming adds further evidence of maroon communities in the South Carolina upcountry.

The author of this important study, Dr. Hugo Prosper Leaming, Bey, was born July 27, 1924 in Richmond, Virginia. He was very proud of his Poor White ancestry. In particular, his great-grandmother, Mary Allen, helped lead "several thousand black and white women, all of them poor people," who led the burning of Richmond at the close of the Civil War, as depicted in Currier and Ives lithographs. Later, Mary Allen, working for the Republican Party, fought for poor White and Black suffrage. Later she sold produce in the Richmond market. Leaming's parents were Silas Leaming and Lillian Allen, who met, courted and married at the First Unitarian Church of Richmond, which Leaming described as the "most liberty loving" church in Richmond. He joined the church at the age of 16 in 1940.<sup>2</sup>

Leaming received a B.A. in 1944 from the University of Richmond, Virginia and an M.A. in 1946 from the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, an experience which convinced him of the spiritual power of multiculturalism. He was ordained as a minister in the Unitarian Universalist Church in 1951 and then pastored the Free Religious Fellowship, a congregation of upper middle-class African American Unitarians. He later ministered in Trenton, New Jersey and Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 1963 he was called to the All Souls First Universalist Society in Chicago. From 1963–1968 he led the congregation at All Souls, pursuing an activist mission. Leaming was arrested in a "sit-in" over housing at the University of Chicago. Subsequently he was arrested again in Albany, Georgia in a civil rights protest led by Martin Luther King.<sup>3</sup> He entered graduate school in the 1970s and received a doctorate in American History from the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle in 1979. A lengthy study of the Ben Ishmael Tribe, a fugitive nation of the Old Northwest appeared in 1977 in a collection of essays on ethnic history.<sup>4</sup>

Viewing himself throughout life as a Poor White, during the 1980s Leaming sought acceptance as an African American in a Black Muslim temple. Eventually he was received and permitted to wear a fez, which he combined with his Unitarian robes. After the loss of his second wife, Grace Thompson (1919–1985), to cancer, Leaming retained the support

of the All Souls First Universalist Society of Chicago, as pastor emeritus, until his death on March 25, 1993.

Transforming this dissertation into book form required enormous labors. Alan Edward Brown of User Services at Colgate University scanned the original into a computer, a task much more difficult than apparent, and he formatted and proofread the entire text. Stacey Snyder of Colgate lent her typing skills to the project, which was an immense help. Donna Brown participated in the typing and editing of the text. I created the index. Robert McKenzie, Claudia Hirsch and Leo Balk of Garland Publishing, Inc. were highly supportive editors. Dr. Roberta Rosen, Cleric and her congregation at All Souls First Universalist Society of Chicago underwrote production of this book and aided immensely with information and cheer.

Graham Hodges  
Colgate University  
Hamilton, NY  
July, 1994

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leaming's introduction discussed the dearth of maroon studies. For the need for study of maroons and other early African American societies in North Carolina see Raymond Gavins' exhaustive historiography of black Carolinians. See Gavins "A 'Sin of Omission': Black Historiography in North Carolina," in Jeffrey J. Crow and Flora Hatley, eds. *Black Americans in North Carolina and the South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-57. Surprisingly Gavins omits Leaming's dissertation. On the American Revolution see Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Graham Russell Hodges, "Black Revolt in New York City and the Neutral Zone, 1775-83," in Paul A. Gilje and William Pencak, *New York in the Age of the Constitution, 1775-1800* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1992), 20-48.



<sup>2</sup> Hugo Leaming, Spiritual Autobiography in "Program Notes for Funeral Service of Hugo Prosper Leaming, March 28, 1993." Courtesy of All Souls First Universalist Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>3</sup> Ron Sakolsky and James Koehnline, eds. *Gone to Croatan: Origins of North American Dropout Culture* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1993), 379. This wonderful collection published in 1993 is in homage to Leaming. Conversations with Roberta Rosen, cleric of All Souls.

<sup>4</sup> Hugo Prosper Leaming, "The Ben Ishmael Tribe A Fugitive 'Nation' of the Old Northwest," in *The Ethnic Frontier: Essays in the History of Group Survival in Chicago and the Midwest*, ed. by Melvin G. Holli (Detroit: Erdmans, 1977). This powerful essay has been reprinted in *Gone to Croatan*, 19-61.

## Introduction

### Los Cimmarones: Maroon Communities in the Western Hemisphere and the Reclaiming of Their North American History.

Maroons were fugitives from slavery who established independent communities in swamps, deep woods, mountains, isolated islands and other wilderness sanctuaries. They defended their territory from the slaveholders, built villages, raised crops and children, created social institutions, and from time to time raided into slavery country to free persons still held in bondage. Such communities were widespread in the West Indies and Latin America from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and have been noted by historians of those lands.

The most famous were the maroons of Jamaica, who fought several wars with the colonial authorities and won a treaty of independence which is still in effect. The maroon state of Palmares in Brazil numbered tens of thousands, endured a century, and defeated several Portuguese and slaveholder armies. The maroons of Surinam (formerly Dutch Guiana) still number thousands and maintain political autonomy and a culture that is overwhelmingly African. In Central America there were the maroons of Panama and the independent maroon state of the Miskita ("Mosquito") Coast. Many West Indian islands had their maroon enclaves: St. Vincent and the other maroon "Neutral Islands" were avoided in dismay by the European colonial powers. Haiti is a continuing maroon republic, its revolution for emancipation and independence was begun by maroons.<sup>1</sup>

Maroon communities varied from very large settlements to those of only a few dozen persons, from those that lasted generations to those of only a few decades, enduring just long enough to become true communities. Maroon activity, together with slave insurrections, have



been seen as the most militant expression of the Black resistance to slavery, and maroon culture has cast light upon the general social history of the Black people in the Western Hemisphere.

There have been no histories of maroon communities within the United States.<sup>2</sup> The silence suggests that they did not exist, that once again this country is the great exception. A recent study has made this negative assumption explicit.<sup>3</sup> The one historian who has written on guerrilla warfare by escaped slaves in the United States, Herbert Aptheker, stated his belief that these fugitives were temporary military bands, not the defense units of permanent, full-fledged communities.<sup>4</sup> The following study is the first attempt to fill this vacuum.

The study is in five parts. The first two are the social and the political history of a hitherto neglected community in seventeenth century North Carolina, which was called Roanoke. It began as a maroon community, a settlement of fugitives, and then, upon the organization of the Colony, dominated the government of North Carolina. Roanoke in its culture and social order continued to be highly atypical of the English colonies. Parts one and two are also a pre-history of later maroons, for when the old order in North Carolina was crushed early in the eighteenth century, it gave birth to a maroon community which existed for another century and a half.

This long-lived community is the subject of the third part of the study, the maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp, along the border of Virginia and North Carolina, the largest swamp on the east coast of North America. It was here that the existence of maroons was most often alleged by nineteenth century writers, leading Aptheker to grant it as a possible exception in his skepticism towards the existence of civilian maroon communities. The narrative political and social history of the Dismal Swamp maroons is followed by the fourth part of the study, an examination of the religious culture of these maroons, including its continuing impact upon the region after the Civil War and the disbandment of the maroon community.

The final section is a political and social history of another sizable community, the Southern piedmont maroons of the eighteenth century. These gathered in the foothills of the upper South early in the century, beyond the ken of slaveholders, and migrated before the advance of white settlers into the back country of South Carolina, where they waged a major maroon war in the 1760s, and another between 1775 and 1783, an important segment of the conflicts known elsewhere as the American Revolution.

Together these histories show a process of development of the maroon form of resistance to slavery by the enslaved. New kinds of sanctuaries were found in response to changed conditions arising from

the dominant society. In latter days the maroon heritage was perpetuated in the general African American community, and even in the European-American. It is a story of movement by individuals and groups, of decisive grasping upon options and strategies, and of extraordinary continuity.

Maroons are thought of as Black, and they usually were. Black people were the central racial group of the Dismal Swamp maroons. African ancestry among the maroons, arousing racial feelings within their enemies, heightened the ferocity of the wars in the South Carolina back country. Yet there were also many maroons who were of Native American (Indian) descent, escaped slaves or remnants of destroyed nations. And there were many other maroons descended from the European poor, escaped indentured servants and other Poor Whites for whom there was no place in plantation society. These predominated in Roanoke, the earliest community studied. All three racial groups were maroons as fugitives from bondage or from other forms of subjugation inherent to the slavery system. They joined in struggle against a common enemy and shared elements from their respective cultures of origin. The scattered settlers of earliest North Carolina, the cluster of settlements in the Great Swamp, and the cluster in the foothills, each constituted a single 'tribe' or confederacy of 'tribes.' There is no trace of internal racial conflict. In these respects the maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas were not very different from those of the West Indies and Latin America, where the merging of Africans and Native Americans was common, and where there are also hints of possible fugitive European participation.<sup>5</sup> *prates; indent. servants; poor*

A detailed comparative maroon study for the Western Hemisphere would be likely to clarify the processes by which such societies and cultures were formed, as well as identify variations arising from differing heritage and environment, physical and social.

From the present study, broad similarities appear between maroons within the United States and those of the other Americas: the discovery of natural sanctuaries; the gathering into groups; the founding of total and long lasting communities; the adjustment to wilderness life; the sharing of heritage; the creation of a new and distinctive culture; the perfecting of small scale guerrilla warfare as the usual mode of resistance; and the occasional waging of full scale maroon wars. These similarities are not to be attributed to communication between the maroons of the various lands, but to similar responses to slavery, the demands of wilderness survival and security, and the similar cultural origins, African, Native American, and European.

It may often be assumed that no detailed political and social history can be reconstructed for a people bound in slavery or hidden in the



wilderness, since such peoples were in no position to maintain archives or publish periodicals and memoirs. It is true that the history of the enslaved can never be written with the kind of apparent precision that is derived from the records of ruling social groups. The historian must make more frequent use of inductive reasoning from a smaller store of reported facts. This procedure, with its special problem of subjectivity, must however be attempted or there can be no history of that majority of mankind who possesses no libraries and no press.

There are a very few conventional sources and studies which speak directly and in detail to this maroon history. (All but one of these were hostile to the subjects of their study.) There were two nineteenth century Southern scholars, their work little utilized by subsequent historians who frankly revealed their knowledge and understanding.<sup>6</sup> There was an 18th century Church of England missionary, remarkable for the quantity and richness of his reports, whose papers were discovered and published after World War II, but have not hitherto been scanned for their contribution to African American history.<sup>7</sup> And there are Aptheker's guerrilla studies, laboriously gathered, and indispensable for the military history of the Dismal Swamp maroons.<sup>8</sup> For the history of seventeenth century Creole North Carolina, the official archives of that colony have proved useful, since that society was more visible than other maroon communities, and dominated the government for a time.<sup>9</sup> But these five are the only available conventional sources of any magnitude.

Most of the sources for this study, especially for the cultural and other non-military history of the maroon communities, are quite different. It is astonishing how much detail can be reconstructed from local history, often ephemeral, from neighborhood histories and old settlers' memoirs published at the village printshop. These amateur or semi-professional historians were largely white, for white ephemera are more likely to be preserved than black. But they are much concerned to include 'human interest' or 'local color' anecdotes in their writings; they hoped for as wide a readership as possible for their loving efforts, even beyond their primary target of relatives and neighbors.<sup>10</sup> So the maroons enter upon these pages, colorful subjects of human interest with a vengeance. Sometimes there is also an apologetic purpose, even a trace of defensiveness. Skeletons in the closet of society can more readily be shut away in the writing of national or regional history than in local. If children in the street are recounting grandpa's tales, what can the poor local historian do but mention them?

In these sources as in the more conventional ones, maroons are usually viewed with great distaste. They are called outlaws, and placed in the context of ordinary, if dramatic, criminality, not social revolt.

The viewpoint is that of the slaveholders and the public opinion they so successfully created. To arrive at a history closer to the facts, values must be reversed. 'Outlaws plundering farms and enticing slaves away' must be translated into 'Maroons engaged in guerrilla warfare and freeing slaves from the plantations.' But the local amateur historian does not make up tales from wholecloth. He does not wish to be scoffed at by other oldtimers of his tight little neighborhood. The task of the social historian of an underground people is to transform antiquarianism, the recounting of wonders, into meaningful history.

One of the most exasperating problems the historian faces in using such sources is the failure of local antiquarians to reveal the African American character of the wondrous events they recount. A cause for the omission of such basic information was probably the reluctance to publicize slave resistance. In other cases the presence of whites and Blacks together in the same "outlaw" band may have been deemed more scandalous than the acts they committed. Elsewhere a taboo may have been operative against the racial designation of a person of questionable ethnic appearance. Racial etiquette seems to have held sway over the majority culture even in the contemplation of outlaws. Happily some of the local historians let the cat out of the bag, and the other sources for the same event can be assembled around the admission of Black ethnicity.

The principal weakness of local history for the reconstruction of Black social history is the lack of sources offered. It is a rare local historian who presents footnotes or their equivalent. The antiquarian's sources were undoubtedly old, long-since destroyed newspapers, family manuscripts also long gone, some eye-witness events, and above all, oral history, traditions handed down and still current when the local historian wrote, or was a child. Another of his sources were the village archives, which he could ponder at his leisure (perhaps even take home with him permanently), in contrast to the professional historian from afar, who can hardly roam from village to village when his subject is such that he can expect to find at most a pertinent sentence or two at each sojourn. The local historian then can be the link between lost sources or other impractical sources and the professional historian, towards the construction of an American social history that can never be derived from national and regional sources.

In trial law there is a rule that only the "best evidence" may be submitted, that is, no source may be introduced if a better source is available. The jury deliberates upon the "best evidence," however much they might wish that better evidence existed. This author does not submit that local antiquarian sources are good evidence; he does insist that they are the best available. This is why he dwells at greater length



than usual upon the reasonableness of such evidence introduced, and has carefully scrutinized the reasoning of other historians, when it is available, on questionable reports. The amount of inductive argumentation in this study is large when compared to conventional or quantitative archival studies in American history. But it is no larger than found in many scholarly works in other fields which require making much from little, such as ancient history.

Once the sources for the history of the Black people or other subjugated peoples are studied, both the best sources that are good and the best sources that are not so good, then it is profitable to turn to standard regional or topical histories of the European-American people, where events cryptic or ambiguous in the context of white society are mentioned, without analysis. When these are placed in the context of the history of the African American people and their allies, new insights may emerge for the subject at hand.

A strong support for the various kinds of evidence offered in this study is their convergence. From so many differing types of sources, distant from each other in space, time and social level, equally heterogeneous in motive and context, the data point to a common center. There is a congruence, a coherence. If it is more reasonable to believe that they are indeed related, rather than a mere coincidence of surprising or intriguing accidents without significance, then a lost history has been reclaimed.

A criticism that has been leveled against some African American histories, and can be applied to this one, is that they are histories not of Black resistance, but of white fears of imaginary Black resistance. In the case of these maroon studies, however, anyone who chooses to believe that they are a compendium of white fantasies must also believe that there exists a collective imagination of many persons remote from one another, with no central published fantasy to communicate and promote the material, yet capable of constructing a consistent and richly elaborated myth. A simple, single-message fantasy may be constructed and spread widely by some such psychological process. It is difficult to see how such a complex and detailed story as this one could have been. There was no organized, systematic oral epic fiction transmitted through the dominant society of the South by song and story.

One highly important and probably most fruitful type of source has been totally omitted from this study—the oral tradition of the African American people. This is the one deep regret the author feels regarding this work. The early North Carolina community was overthrown over two and a half centuries ago, and the history of the foothill maroons of South Carolina ends almost two centuries ago. Therefore, it is unlikely that a search for memories of those events would be rewarding. But the

✓ | Dismal Swamp maroons dissolved their community and came out of the swamp just over a century ago, and their tradition must be alive and bountiful among their grandchildren in the Black communities of the vicinity of Norfolk and Suffolk, Virginia, and Elizabeth City and Edenton, North Carolina. Insurmountable practical obstacles prevented the author's accomplishment of this portion of the research. He hopes that some resident of the region will produce a study from oral sources, amplifying and correcting the history here presented from written sources alone.

The history of the foothill maroons encompasses at most a sixty year span. But the maroon community of the Dismal Swamp existed for some 150 years, 200 if the North Carolina prehistory be included. The surprising abundance of sources for the construction of maroon history is demonstrated by the ease with which meaningful chronological periods may be conceptualized for the history of the Dismal Swamp maroons:<sup>11</sup>

#### Pre-History

1. *The Age of the Unauthorized Independent Roanoke Government, 1650 (or earlier)–1665.* Fugitives and others from Virginia establish their own government south of the Dismal Swamp and begin to develop a distinctive culture, in close association with the Native Americans.
2. *Roanoke and English Peaceful Co-existence, 1665–1708.* The Roanoke society controls the legislature of Albemarle (North Carolina), causing the colony to be highly atypical.
3. *The Overthrow of the Roanoke Community, 1708–1714.* The old social order is overthrown in the Quaker Uprising and the Tuscarora War. The new regime seeks to reform Carolina upon the slavery plantation model of Virginia and South Carolina.

#### History of the Maroons Proper

1. *The Tuscarora Hegemony, 1714–1731.* Elements of the Tuscarora alliance and the destroyed Roanoke society enter the Dismal Swamp as maroons. African Americans arrive in increasing numbers.
2. *The Scratch Hall Ascendency, 1731–1775.* Native Americans and Creoles, losing their separate identities, become the Scratch Hall tawny folk, and take the lead in guerrilla operations against the



plantations. African Americans, in alliance, predominate in the northern sector of the Swamp.

3. *The Alliance with Britain, 1775-1795.* Black maroons take the lead and dominate the plantation country around the Swamp.
4. *The Era of Peter II, 1795-1813.* Guerrilla warfare continues without British alliance. Efforts are made to extend communications to plantation slaves and to other regions.
5. *The Era of Robert Ferebee, 1813-1831.* Concerted guerrilla warfare reaches its height for any period without military allies. Outreach efforts fail.
6. *The Era of Spiritual Leadership, 1831-1852.* Coordination with the Nat Turner Insurrection fails. Slaveholders establish cordon to contain maroons. Guerrilla operations curtailed. Immigration of new fugitives reduced. Spiritual leadership exerted over eastern Virginia and eastern North Carolina.
7. *The Era of Osman, 1852-1862.* Immigration increases. Guerrilla campaigns increase.
8. *The Era of Victory, 1862-1868.* Military alliance with the United States. The Buffalo soldiers, Black and tan, operate as independent commands and regiments of the North Carolina Colored Volunteers. Surrounding counties surrender to maroons, without U.S. military presence. Last paramount chief becomes first Black American political 'boss,' leader of the Black segment of the Republican Party of Virginia. Maroons dissolve their community and enter the general African American community.

Details from the vivid glimpse of the South Carolina foothill maroons provided by thorough reporting of their full scale warfare in the open countryside leave no doubt that this community was long a-gathering, no overnight rally of freshly escaped slaves. But a detailed political and social survey of the Dismal Swamp maroons indicates that here too was a continuous community. The briefness of the interim between so many events make it unreasonable to assume that the Swamp was merely a convenient refuge for unrelated bands swiftly forming and unforming. There may well have been a large turnover of population in the Dismal Swamp, as in many of today's urban neighborhoods. Yet those who come and go relate to a nucleus of rooted residents and to social institutions, such as the church and tavern today; the community continues. The most concrete evidence of the continuity

of the Dismal Swamp Community is the problem of ingress. How could newcomers enter the treacherous swampland and survive? Only by learning the paths of safety from veterans.

The history of these maroon communities also demonstrates that they were not without effect upon the wider world, and serves to illustrate a function of African American history that has not been sufficiently appreciated or utilized, the illumination of otherwise murky problems in European American and European history. Such problems addressed by this study include the old puzzle of the origin of North Carolina, the late establishment of slavery in that colony and its relative failure to take firm hold, the sources of British military emancipation policy during the American Revolution, the ferocity of that war in the Southern back country, the winning of the Civil War in the Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound theater of operations, and the development of a widespread folk spiritualism rich in poetic symbols and deemed by many to be of help in their daily lives.

The primary value of his study to the author is the memorialization of communities long forgotten save by a few of their children. The history of these maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas holds intrinsic value as an example of one variety of the human condition. These histories are as valid a subject for study as the history of the Bahamas, Monaco, Tahiti, the city states of Corinth and Benin, or any other small society. Heroism and fear, creativeness and failure, problems and solutions are not restricted to the populous political divisions of mankind. Those who are considered the lesser deserve recognition and commemoration when they pass, just as the mighty. The author's bias is clear. In his view these small communities were gallant nations.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1973). A comprehensive bibliography is attached to this collection of historical essays.



<sup>2</sup> The only essay on maroons in the United States in the above collection is the one cited below in note 4. In the bibliography of *Maroon Societies* the only citations for the United States are concerned with Black-Native American relations or the general question of the extent of slave rebelliousness.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 69-72, 155-157, 180-182. Virginia was too cold.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Aptheker, "Slave Guerrilla Warfare," in *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> The former may be found throughout Price, *Maroon Societies*. The latter refers to the symbiotic relationship that developed between the maroons of Jamaica and the surrounding white parish, and to the situation in the Bahamas, Chapter 5, note 25.

<sup>6</sup> Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E.J. Hale and Son, 1858). William Gilmore Simms, *The History of South Carolina*, new and rev. ed. (Charleston: Russell and Jones, 1860).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution*, ed. Richard T. Hooker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

<sup>8</sup> Aptheker, "Slave Guerrilla Warfare." Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, new ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1969), *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1886-90), hereafter referred to as *CRNC*.

<sup>10</sup> The author thanks Dr. Carolyn Wallace, Curator, Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library, for her suggestion that printed ephemera may be seeking readership, whereas manuscripts may deal more with matters of personal concern. This was in response to his puzzlement at the wealth of material in the former and the dearth in the latter.

<sup>11</sup> The following periodization scheme is summarized from Books one and two of the present work. See also the list of ruler on page 328.

# Hidden Americans



## Book One

### The Roanoke Community

## Part I

### That Border Strip

Independent and Autonomous Roanoke  
(called North Carolina), Its Social History,  
1650–1714



## Chapter 1

### Fugitives from Jamestown: The Origin of the Roanoke Community

The first known maroon community of long duration within the United States was established around 1714 in the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina. But there is a maroon pre-history that bears study first: the history of seventeenth century North Carolina. For from the beginning of English-speaking settlement about 1650 or earlier, down to 1714, a social order existed in North Carolina that differed fundamentally from the societies of the other English colonies. This people, unusual in their way of life and attitudes, controlled the legislative assembly of North Carolina down to the latter date. At the end their political power and social system were violently overthrown by those who wished to reconstruct the colony upon the model of Virginia and South Carolina. A remnant of the old order escaped into the Great Dismal Swamp and became the nucleus of the maroon community. There is intrinsic value in a consideration of that earlier social system, for its deviation from the usual American approach to race and slavery. Moreover, for a history of the later maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas, it is well to examine the history of their mother country, seventeenth century North Carolina, before that of her offspring, the maroon community of the Dismal Swamp.

This peculiar earliest immigrant society of North Carolina did not begin as a European colony, but as a free gathering of settlers without authorization from overseas. There were other earlier settlements in North America that were irregular from the European point of view. Some of these also resembled seventeenth century North Carolina in their negative relationship to colonial systems of servitude, others in their racial attitudes, quite different from the Anglo-Saxon norm in

North America during later centuries. Before the official founding of English colonies, these settlements unrecognized by any European power were scattered along the Atlantic coast between the lands later called Newfoundland and North Carolina. Charles M. Andrews, in the first volume of his classic *The Colonial Period of American History* wrote paragraphs and discursive footnotes which gathered together would constitute an essay on these earliest and unofficial settlements in the North.<sup>1</sup> Some of them were pre-Columbian, dating back to the fifteenth century or even the fourteenth. The people of these settlements were of Portuguese, Basque, Breton, Welsh and West-of-England<sup>2</sup> descent, from the lands that jut out into the Atlantic. Their livelihood was obtained from the Atlantic fisheries and a commerce in furs. Fishermen and other sailors from Europe in their tiny ships made frequent periodic visits to obtain the produce of the western shores. Mention of these fisher fleets in other historical studies has not included the information that some of the visitors remained year round in continuous settlements. The immigrants also ranged far inland in search of furs. As the generations passed, they came to be of Native American as well as European descent, if it be taken that their fathers, as sailors, were unlikely to bring women with them. The existence of settlements and the inland travels of this folk suggest that their relationship with the Native Americans was peaceful. As fur traders they must have become familiar with Native American culture; as the permanent representatives of the fishing fleets they must also have held on to some of the European culture. Without European political sponsorship the settlements governed themselves. As the seventeenth century began, these were joined by other unofficial settlements, land ventures from England whose authorizations were irregular. Some of the official and permanent English colonies chose sites that had already been inhabited by old settlers. The coming of stern government, a sedentary society and Puritan religion was a disaster for these peoples. They were not wiped out as were the Native American nations, but they were scorned, and those of dark skins and unheard-of languages relegated to the status of outcasts. It does not strain the imagination to see them as the nucleus for the 'colored'<sup>3</sup> water-front slums of the Northern seaports, fishermen, dockhands and crewmen for Colonial America's whalers and merchant ships.

The South too had its unrecognized immigrant settlements before the official colonies, in particular upon the stretch of coast that became North Carolina. Following the first European maritime exploration of that coast, the Spanish in 1525 attempted to establish a colony in the Native American Kingdom of Chicora, which lay across the present border of North and South Carolina, between Cape Fear and the Santee



River. With the Spaniards came about one hundred Africans, held in bondage. The conquistadores were not successful. Swampy land, loss of provisions, widespread sickness and many deaths, growing hostility from the Native Americans and slave insurrections forced the Spanish to abandon their effort and depart. The African rebels however remained with their Native American allies, the first known Black community in what became the United States.<sup>4</sup> For the South, this was the first settlement from the Old World of any nationality that was permanent, in the sense that the settlers remained in their new land. It preceded St. Augustine by forty years, Jamestown by eighty-two. We do not know the later history of the settlers, but their beginning was auspicious, as friends of the Native American rulers.

The second known settlement of immigrants to what became the southern English colonies, permanent by the same sense, was also established on the shores that became North Carolina, and also achieved by 'colored' insurrectionists and pioneers. In the Caribbean there had been a spectacularly successful military alliance of Black maroons and the "Elizabethan seadogs," England's unofficial privateers, against their common enemy, Spain. In 1586 the campaign was renewed. The slaves of the Spanish colonies of Hispaniola (Haiti) and Cartagena (on the South American Mainland) rose up in insurrection as the fleet of Sir Francis Drake attacked from the sea. Together the allies took and sacked the cities. To follow up this victory, previous Black and English attacks along the Spanish gold trail across the Isthmus of Panama were now to be resumed. But now as they gathered after battle, Drake informed them of an alternative. A year before, his friend Sir Walter Raleigh had founded an English colony at an island called Roanoke on the coast of North America. There was need for settlers, and soil and climate promised a good life. Did they wish to go? The freedmen consulted among themselves, and determined to pursue war no more, but agriculture and its attendant trades in the colony of their ally.

The immigrants who set sail in Drake's fleet were numerous and of diverse origins. Though all had been slaves together in the Spanish colonies, they were Caribbean Native Americans (in culture quite different from Native North Americans), West Africans from the Guinea coast, both men and women, and Moors, that is, Muslims from North Africa or the western Sudan. Their numbers are given as 300 for the Native Americans and about 200 each for the two groups of Africans.

Their destination, Roanoke Island, lies off the coast of present-day North Carolina, not far south of the Virginia line. When the immigrants arrived, they found the English, who had numbered only a hundred, disheartened by troubles like those suffered by the Spanish on that coast sixty-one years before. Now a storm of hurricane proportions



struck the island, and in panic the English abandoned their colony and set sail with Drake to England. But contemporary records indicate that the colored immigrants remained, on their own, not a representative of English authority among them. Did the English expect them to wait on Roanoke Island for the arrival of a new governor? They didn't. When Raleigh's next colony arrived the following year, there was no sign of the settlers. They had moved on, beyond the reach of Spanish or English.

There is correspondence between English and Islamic authorities in which the return of the Moors is promised, but no report that the promise was fulfilled. Whether the Moors went on to Africa with Drake's fleet or remained with the other settlers is not clear.<sup>5</sup>

There is no reason to believe that this African and Caribbean Native American settlement was annihilated. The local Native Americans, like others of the North American coast, were not prone to immediate, unprovoked hostility towards strangers. On the contrary, to their own undoing in their relations with Europeans, they were wont to accept settlements from abroad so long as these did not encroach upon their towns and the fields and hunting grounds they used. Also the immigrants commanded considerable strength; they were not a small group by the standard of many Native American nations of the region. Then too the shared experiences of the immigrants may have unified them and eventually drawn them into one community despite their several origins. None were fresh from their homelands. All had lived together in the Spanish domain. They had suffered in slavery together and together they had organized their revolt and carried it to victory. This implies a means of communication, such as a Spanish Creole language; perhaps before arrival in North America they had begun the process of observing, then sharing each other's cultures, the rituals, songs and customs of Islam, Guinea and the Caribbean. We know the first decision of the new settlement was unanimous: to depart from the site of the English colony. Like the Africans who had settled two hundred miles to the south, they enjoyed favorable conditions for survival. But we do not know the ultimate destiny of either settlement, whether they found one another, or whether their descendants still live in the African American community.

Two years later the English newcomers of Raleigh's last colony at Roanoke Island also disappeared. Feeble attempts to solve this mystery were unsuccessful. They were presumed dead, and most later judgments have concurred. Unlike the colored settlers, the English colonists would have had no voluntary purpose to leave the island or to remain out of sight. In later times this "Lost Colony of Roanoke" became a romantic legend. Virginia has claimed it for its heritage, and so has North

Carolina. Each summer the patriotic, sentimental and tourist-attractive pageant of the Lost Colony is re-enacted on the Island. So famous did the story become in children's readers that the name of the Lost Colony's Virginia Dare, the first English child to be born in America, has been attached to a nationally distributed and inexpensive wine. Yet the previous disappearance of settlers from Roanoke Island, a group that cannot be presumed to have died soon after arrival, may be of greater historical significance, as symbol and illustration of the ways and peoples by which the territory of the United States was settled. The scholar who at last revealed the history of this settlement says:

But the Indians and negroes [sic: British usage] may well be reckoned a 'lost colony'. If they were lost in what is now North Carolina, when free coloured labor was Drake's intended gift to the English colonies there, it is a curious and ironic commentary on the later history of this and other plantation colonies.<sup>6</sup>

Though England in 1607 at last succeeded in founding its first permanent American colony, Virginia, the region to the south remained without authorized government or settlement for almost sixty years. Yet settlement there was, persons moving down from Virginia into the unknown land. This was the only one of the many independent and unofficial settlements in North America that went on to become an official colony, the English Colony of North Carolina. It was these unauthorized settlers who developed a distinctive social order and dominated the government of North Carolina until their overthrow in 1714. This was the people whose remnant then fled into a more secure natural sanctuary, establishing the very long lived maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp.

Wesley Craven, the specialist in Southern colonial history, summarizes the agreement among historians that this is the only one of the thirteen English colonies that cannot be traced back to an official settlement: "It is impossible to speak definitely of the first permanent settlement of Carolina."<sup>7</sup> Virginia long claimed the region, she drew up paper jurisdictions, her gentlemen organized land companies. But there is no indication in the colonial records of Virginia that her law ever ran to the south, or that plans for settlement were ever accomplished.<sup>8</sup> An early Carolina grant from England clouded Virginia's claims, but it too did not eventuate in any settlement. Then in 1665<sup>9</sup> a second Carolina grant by England took hold; the first official government was established in that territory. In the meantime, for some fifteen years or



more, settlers had moved south beyond Virginia, into a land without English jurisdiction, still ruled by the Native American nations.

✓ Seeds of the unusual society that was to emerge in North Carolina a little later may be discerned in the scanty accounts of the earliest immigrants into that country. There may be nothing striking in the way of life of early pioneers differing from that of established settlements; what is exceptional is that these earliest pioneers remained the dominant element of the official colony. Their political power was not superseded by newcomers with differing ways and purposes until almost fifty years after the establishment of colonial government. There was social continuity between the periods of independent and of official colonization.

The earliest date of settlement reported is seventeen years before the official establishment, but it is from the latest and weakest of the few sources that were recorded and have survived. In 1648 settlers purchased land from the Native American nations south of Virginia, according to an official testimony by one of the settlers sixty years later.<sup>10</sup>

The other sources are contemporary with the events reported. In 1650 Virginia sent out an exploratory expedition into the land of the southern Native American nations:

... our Gouvernour had ordered us to go, and speake with an Englishman amongst them, and to enquire for an English woman cast away long since, and was amongst these Nations.

The explorers were turned back short of their goals by swamps and marshlands, but obtained information from Native Americans concerning immigrants who lived in that country. "There was a Wainoake Indian told him that there was an Englishman..." Another informant spoke of another Englishman a great way off at the farther "Tuskarood" (Tuscarora) town. "... and had information that at that time there were other English amongst the Indians." The investigators were not sure of the nationality of all the immigrants in the southern country. They sent a letter, in care of Native Americans, written in English, Latin, Spanish French and Dutch. There is evidence that settlers had joined with the Native Americans not only in respect to permission to settle and in location near Native American towns, but also in matters of government or culture. One immigrant was reported to have already become a "Cockarous" or minister of state to one of the kings.<sup>11</sup> If there were a normal period for acquaintance, trial and language study before the appointment, this would once more push the date for settlement back into the 1640s.



Four years later, in 1554, the cosmopolitan character of the settlers to the south was confirmed by the findings of another exploratory party from Virginia. An Englishman had established himself a fur trade outpost at Roanoke Island. One of the wealthier residents of the capital of the Tuscaroras was a Spaniard, with his family of thirty, a number likely to include retainers as well as kin. (There is no more reason to think that he was an agent of Spain than that the English-speaking settlers were agents of England.) Adding to the international atmosphere of the Tuscarora capital there were seven African American residents. Another and prominent African American settler in the southern country, an associate of the Spaniard, apparently in business, maintained his headquarters in another kingdom, that of the "Newxes," described as a great nation.<sup>12</sup>

Three years later, in 1557, the settler at Roanoke Island, whose name was Nathaniel Batts, had moved his headquarters over fifty miles west to the end of the principal waterway of the region, later known as Albemarle Sound. His establishment seems to have served as a community center for the settlers scattered east and north towards Virginia, who by now numbered at least some hundreds, perhaps as many as two thousand.<sup>13</sup> The arrival of the first English government was still eight years in the future.

There were then settlers before Carolina, and most came from Virginia. But what kind of people were they? What was their motive to settle in a land beyond all European jurisdiction? They were not like the old unofficial settlements of the North, of maritime origin before the recorded explorations of the coast, or irregular projects from England. Nor were they like the sixteenth century Southern settlements of slaves escaped from the Spanish Empire. Most of the settlers of the 1650s in this region were not African American, though the proportion who were was large, considering that Virginia's black population was still quite small.

Explanations for this unauthorized settlement have been offered by most historians of North Carolina. Unlike the records of this colony, those of Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina, and of the New England colonies and New York, provide a clear statement of the original permanent settlement with which each colony began, as do the records of the later colonies. But the origins of North Carolina have remained a puzzle. There have been three major explanations offered, one that was exploded a long time ago, another that has been accepted for a longer time, and the explanation to be offered here. All three have been essentially based upon reasoning not data, since an unauthorized settlement is one kind of community that is not likely to produce records sufficient for the historian's use.

In 1812 the first historian of North Carolina declared that the early settlers had been Quaker fugitives from the religious intolerance of Virginia.<sup>14</sup> The idea was reasonable. In seventeenth century Virginia there was persecution of adherents of churches that dissented from the Church of England, especially Quakers. The idea was also flattering to North Carolina, relating its founding to the general struggle for religious freedom and to a people whose image in the nineteenth century was one of saintliness, truthfulness and hard work. Five subsequent historians took up the explanation,<sup>15</sup> and two or three generations of North Carolinians were raised upon a reasonable and satisfying history of origins. The blow fell in 1886: it wasn't so. New evidence had been found that the early North Carolinians had not been Quakers. In fact practically none had adhered to any church, Dissenter or Church of England.<sup>16</sup> In 1672 the first Quaker missionary reported that there were only two member of his society in the Colony, a husband and wife.<sup>17</sup> A Church of England missionary report of 1709 shows that the myth of Quaker origins had grown up long before its publication in 1812, and how the myth developed. The report is well balanced and appears fair.

And now, sir, I shall examine a little the Quakers' pretences, who plead that they were the first settlers in that country; but this (according to the best accounts I could get) seems false in fact,—that religion being scarce heard of there till some years after the settlement; it is true, some of the most ancient inhabitants, after George Fox went over, did turn Quakers.<sup>18</sup>

The explanation which replaced the exploded Quaker notion has been that the motive of the first settlers south of Virginia was their search for good bottom land. This has been advanced by almost all historians of the past ninety years, down to the present.<sup>19</sup> The quest for new land to cultivate is such a straight-forward explanation, so natural and universal, that it would seem almost to defy the need for supportive data. Implicit is the assertion that there was nothing unusual about the settlement. It was merely one segment of the expansion of the American frontier—that cycle of farming, accumulation of capital, purchase and improvement of cheap frontier land, and renewed farming which extended Anglo-Saxon settlement from coast to coast between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. This broad explanation might be sufficient, for want of specific information, for the settlement of any part of the United States at any period of expansion, provided that the area in question did not offer insurmountable obstacles to normal



American commercial farming. If it did, one would expect the territory to be by-passed until the special problems were overcome. The region south of Virginia offered just such overwhelming obstacles to Virginia's favored mode of life and livelihood, the raising of crops for sale. No informed planter in his right mind would think of buying acreage south of Virginia, whatever the price, and information was available, from sources such as the exploratory expedition that was driven back by swamps and marshes.

There was ample "rich bottom land" all right, at the bottom of the swamps. In the region of settlement there was some dry land in sufficiently large parcels to become eventually large plantations or smaller prosperous farms. But so much of the country was wet, and a great part really deep swamp,<sup>20</sup> that those who sought land to cultivate for cash crops would have avoided the region as they did the smaller swampy neighborhoods of the settled regions of Virginia. If rice planting had been known, the original settlement of North Carolina might have been more conventional. But in Virginia tobacco was king.

Besides dominating the terrain and slicing up the dry acreage, the swampiness of the region between Virginia and Albemarle Sound created a second obstacle to normal agricultural settlement and a second objection to the current explanation of the motive of settlers. The Great Dismal Swamp was a barrier, impassable at worst and dangerous at best, to all communication between the southern region and Virginia, whether for information, supplies or cash crops.<sup>21</sup> This barrier did not cease to hinder the progress of agriculture in northeastern North Carolina until the completion of the Dismal Swamp Canal between Albemarle Sound and Chesapeake Bay in 1814.

If a would-be planter of the seventeenth century were to obtain a sufficiency of dry adjacent land on the naturally drained shore of Albemarle Sound or a similar portion of one of the rivers that emptied into that bay, the likelihood of his building up his land into a profitable establishment would still be scant, because of yet another obstacle. The outer banks along the Atlantic and the shallowness of the channels into Albemarle Sound forbade the entry of ocean-going ships. Nothing came in or out save by canoe or the small craft of petty traders.<sup>22</sup> The sale of tobacco for direct shipment to England, made possible by the hospitable waterways of Chesapeake Bay, was the commercial basis for Virginia's flourishing plantations. Without direct sale the margin for profit, precarious at best, would be cut to a point unthinkable for a competent prospective planter. Later with the development of the port of Norfolk at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, a system of transshipment from small to large craft was established. But even this modest improvement was not available to the country south of Virginia in the mid-seventeenth



century. It was a region isolated in all respects, but isolated totally for any possibility of profitable commercial agriculture.

Another obstacle to agricultural expansion into the south was Native American rule over the region, an authority not only *de facto* but for the time *de jure*, for lack of a contending European claim to which ambitious newcomers might rally. Those immigrants who did come, settled with permission of the ruler and Council of the Tuscarora Nation and smaller nations who were their allies, clients or subdued enemies. In this land at that time a settler refrained from taking the fields or cutting down the hunting grounds in use by Native Americans or else suffered the consequences of the remaining obstacle to the spread of Virginia's plantation system.

The region was, at the time of the first settlement, officially beyond the jurisdiction of England. It was a land outside Christendom, in the secular as well as religious sense of the term. Disquiet, even panic, at the thought of removing to the world of heathenism may have been a deterrent to the land hungry, if one considers cultural identity an inner force comparable in strength to the desire for wealth. However that may be, there were practical implications in the lack of European jurisdiction that would have impelled planter pioneers in other directions than south. In the region without European government there would be no colonial council or assembly with the resources and power to protect and promote the planter and commercial interest. There would be no colonial governor to invoke the greater resources and power of the European motherland when they were required. There would be no county court or sheriff to protect life, liberty and property if immigrant neighbors decided that the planter was unworthy of protection, or worse, if a Native American nation exercised its ultimate sovereignty contrary to the interests of the planter. And there would be no colonial militia to clear away the Native Americans, the owners from the soil, the rulers from the land. These were ludicrously heavy prices to contemplate paying, to obtain cheaper land or lower taxes.<sup>23</sup>

That these obstacles, or others, did obstruct the migration of the land hungry is supported by the condition of the second generation of settlers at the beginning of the next century, when records are more plentiful. Their condition suggests that persons with ambition, capital and aptitude for commercial farming did not make their way to North Carolina. In sharp contrast to plantation Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina, this was a colony of poor subsistence farms. There were a few gentlemen of substance with wealthy plantations and slaves to work them, but too few, too thinly scattered across the country, to exert leadership over the vast majority of poor farmers who scratched a meager living from the ground by their own labor.<sup>24</sup> Wesley Craven

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concern

summarizes that this was as poverty-stricken a community as any in America.<sup>25</sup> Rather than envisage ambitions, land-hungry settlers' neglecting to investigate the obstacles, then failing in their purpose yet remaining as marginal farmers, it is more reasonable to suppose that the early settlers had never expected or hoped to become affluent farmers, and had been driven into the new country by quite other motives.

Before proceeding to the suggested solution, it is necessary to consider subsidiary arguments for land hunger as a motive, advanced by adherents of that explanation. Only one proponent has raised the question of obstacles to commercial farm settlement, though the geographical and commercial isolation of the region and its lack of any English government have been carefully noted and fully accepted in other contexts. He mentions the problems of the Dismal Swamp barrier and the presence of the Native American nations, to dismiss them without discussion: the trip from Virginia was rugged, but short; the nations were weak.<sup>26</sup> For the length of the Dismal Swamp journey however, it is necessary to include the Virginia as well as the North Carolina portion of the Swamp, and the extent of the Swamp in the seventeenth century, twice the area it has been since its recent draining. If thirty miles be taken as a conservative estimate of the shortest bee-line across the Swamp in those days, and ten miles be added for detours, then a rate of travel reasonably estimated at a mile a day for the average traveler would make a journey well over a month, with constant danger of drowning in mud or becoming permanently lost.<sup>27</sup> This is a real barrier.

The statement of the weakness of the region's Native Americans is not echoed in other studies. Most were small nations, as throughout the east coast, but formidable in war. Encircling the region were the Tuscaroras, one of the several large nations of the South. Their often reported peaceableness must be distinguished from the question of their strength. If they were especially peaceable, it was not from weakness. The strength of these nations was demonstrated in the devastating Tuscarora War of 1711-1714, when the ratio of populations was ten times<sup>28</sup> less favorable to the Native Americans than it had been in the seventeenth century. The immigrants who risked a fearful journey to settle beyond the reach of European authority would seem to have had more desperate motives or fewer alternatives than gentlemen and yeomen seeking profitable plantations.

An argument that has been offered in support of the land hunger explanation for settlement states that by the 1650s Virginia lacked sufficient land, especially in large tracts along navigable waterways, for her growing population, now 22,000.<sup>29</sup> But it is not clear from the

original size



evidence as advanced that Virginia at that date had reached such an historic watershed in her colonial development: the completion of settlement within her borders, the necessity to emigrate beyond the colony. Perhaps what is referred to here was a temporary administrative crisis, the kind more likely to be resolved by petitions for rectification than by emigration. One source appears to be the report that great plantations along the rivers lay unplanted, the owners dead and without heirs, forcing those who sought land to leave the rivers where marketing was cheap "& seek free places."<sup>30</sup> But this is reported for a date immediately following "the starving time," the enormous loss of life from famine, disease and Native American attacks, from which Virginia recovered following its first generation of settlement. Another apparent source reported that thirty-five whites living in a house near Jamestown had complained of the barrenness of their plantation. This would appear a local problem, not the signal that Virginia's land had already burned out from careless cultivation.<sup>31</sup>

Studies of the expansion of settlement from the neighborhood of Jamestown through the rest of Virginia show that there were still regions for expansion inside the colony without need for planters to contemplate the ominous no-man's land to the south. One study states that by 1650 Virginia had "footholds" (a start, not a finish) on the Eastern Shore, the York-Pamunkey neck beyond the head of the York River and the whole Chesapeake Bay coast from Hampton Roads to the Potomac.<sup>32</sup> Another study lists the directions of settlement through the 1650s as west, up the James, York and Rappahannock Rivers, north up the Eastern Shore to Maryland, and south towards the Dismal Swamp.<sup>33</sup> But the expansion southward between the 1630s and 1650s was slow as compared to the northerly movements.<sup>34</sup> In the 1650s the newest frontier for Virginia was along the Potomac River, across from Maryland.<sup>35</sup> The exploration of the Shenandoah Valley by Governor Spotswood and its settlement were not to occur until the next century. With settlement active in frontier areas of the colony, and northernmost Virginia about to be opened up, there was no need for intended planters to choose a region beyond all English government. This likely consideration in pioneer thinking becomes especially pointed when it be remembered that the expansion of settlement in Virginia was accompanied step by step with wars of extermination waged against the Native Americans.<sup>36</sup> South of Anglo-Saxon law there was no possibility for this cleansing process, prerequisite for the settlement of the civilized.

Virginia's land crisis thus appears to have occurred a little late to have been a factor in the early settlement of North Carolina. The filling up of lands along Chesapeake Bay and the rivers below the Fall Line



may have been a factor after 1700, when powerful interests in Virginia began to work for the destruction of the Tuscarora Nation and their friends, the North Carolina settler community, a regime profoundly uninterested in the progress of the plantation frontier.

An argument for the early settlement of North Carolina through the normal expansion of the plantation frontier might be seen in large land grants, with attached lists of laborers to be transported, which are found in the records of Virginia.<sup>37</sup> These appear to reflect the usual mode of settlement in the seventeenth century. To encourage growth of population and productivity, colonies offered land to planters in return for their transportation of laborers, usually indentured servants from Britain, until the growth of the African slave trade. If these grants are accepted at face value, they are evidence for the planting of large estates in early North Carolina, though this would raise the question of what happened to them a few years later.

But these particular grants of Carolina, registered in Virginia between 1663 and 1666, are enigmas. Why were grants for Carolina issued in Virginia? Is there significance in their being granted at the time when Carolina was receiving its first colonial government? Were they a last-minute assertion of Virginia's claims to the territory? Did Governor Berkeley of Virginia act instead as one of the Proprietors of the new colony and their agent, but if so, why did he register the grants in the Virginia records instead of in a separate book for Carolina? Were the laborers on the lists indentured servants, and if so, was their transportation obtaining land for their masters twice, first in Virginia for their transportation from Europe, then in Carolina for their transportation from Virginia? Could a land investor move servants from colony to colony and thus obtain multiple grants for the same persons? Did a servant's stepping across the border line between two colonies entitle his master to a grant, when the law had been established to compensate masters for their expenses in transporting servants across the Atlantic? There are more specific and even more suspicious problems in these grants. Some to whom the grants were made remained in Virginia instead of supervising their supposedly transported laborers in Carolina.<sup>38</sup> Some listed as laborers to be transported from Virginia were already settlers in Carolina. One is listed three times for as many parcels of land for his supposed master. This person, posing as a laborer for transportation, already owned considerable acreage in Carolina purchased from the Native Americans, and was one of the leaders of the unauthorized settlement and the new colony.<sup>39</sup>

These are problems for a specialist in colonial economic history, if that scholar were writing a history of irregular land operations. These discrepancies may represent a more audacious fraud than those found in

other grants, for the transportation of non-existent indentured servants from Europe.<sup>40</sup> It is conceivable that not a person named in these grants ever arrived in Carolina as planter or laborer who was not already there on his own. All that can be affirmed here is that the ambiguity of these records is such that they cannot be used as evidence for the settlement of North Carolina, much less for the establishment of large plantations worked by landless laborers, a type of agricultural organization most uncharacteristic of seventeenth century North Carolina according to all other sources.

The preceding discussion has shown that there were insuperable obstacles to commercial farming in the country south of Virginia which would have deterred prospective agricultural immigrants, that there is insufficient evidence of the termination of the frontiers within Virginia or other acute land shortage at the time under consideration, and that the poverty of North Carolina agriculture later in the century suggests that the first settlers had not been aggressive planters and yeomen who remained despite the crushing of their hopes. The quest for rich bottom lands is therefore not a reasonable explanation for the initial unauthorized settlement of the region.

What then remains among the common causes of migration that may reasonably apply to this settlement? Having set aside the migrations of the ambitious for self-improvement, there remain the migrations of the desperate. Flights from oppression are common enough in history. That North Carolina was settled by fugitives from religious persecution was disproved long ago. The leading historian of North Carolina today has pointed out that there was no political conflict in Virginia in the mid-seventeenth century to create political refugees for the first settling of Carolina.<sup>41</sup> But there is a third and more common kind of oppression, and one that characteristically causes its victims to flee into the unknown: social-economic subjugation.

The present study then offers as the most reasonable explanation for the early settlement of North Carolina the flight of escaped indentured servants from Virginia, as well as persons who had completed their indentures, landless paupers subjected to scorn and to criminal penalties for vagabondage, beggary and trespass. In accord with population ratios, most would have been white, some black. This explanation can rest upon hard data no more than the previous ones. Unlike escaped slaves of later centuries, indentured servants did not write narratives that have survived. The present explanation is offered as the most reasonable in light of the suitability of North Carolina as a place of refuge, and the social conditions that prevailed in Virginia. Several concurring opinions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be cited to show that there have been a few other students of North



Carolina history to whom this explanation for settlement appeared reasonable.

Each of the major obstacles to serious consideration of the southern land by prospective planters proves to be a major advantage of that country for fugitives.<sup>42</sup> The general swampiness of the region could not have much dismayed a fugitive, for all the land he sought was an acre or two from which to supplement his game and fish with corn and herbs. But the prevalence of swamps would necessarily have been a comfort to any fugitive, into which to retire for a short period if strangers came near whom he felt 'twere best to shun.

A fugitive could die in the mud of the Great Dismal Swamp as well as any person during the terrifying journey from Virginia. But if he were one of those destined to live to the first dry lands on the southern side, then as if in a dream what had been a monster would become thenceforth his beloved protector. What was a barrier to commerce, to the marketing of cash crops, was also a barrier to the Governor's men or master's men from the north. Those more analytical might add: also a barrier to the wrong kind of settlers, people who enslaved people.

That other barrier which completed the isolation of the country, the outer banks and shallow channels of the coast, was another curse upon the commercial minded, another blessing for the fugitive. For what would he need the placid vastness of virtually landlocked Albemarle Sound, except to fish and take his pleasure, unless he was one of the daring sailors, proud of their weather sense, who took their canoes out into the Atlantic and up to Chesapeake, to exchange small bundles of tobacco for shot and powder, ribbons or cooking pan? For the fugitive, the greatest pleasure would have been the horizon of the sound, forever free of His Majesty's men of war.

To those who had fled the rule of English gentlemen, the supremacy of Native American power in the new land could only have been a comfort. If the kings of this country tolerated the presence of such immigrants as inoffensive, surely fugitives would have made clear their preference for the sovereignty of the Native American nations. It is unlikely that fugitives representative of the ancient British poor would have yearned to possess the lands of the Native American with the passion that consumed their betters, accustomed to dreams of power and riches. In the country below Virginia there was enough for all. The wise ones of these nations taught that the beasts of woods and waters were for those who caught them, the food of the earth for those who planted it. Immigrants living off the hunt and their kitchen gardens would not have argued with that doctrine, and likely recalled that not long ago Britons too had possessed commons, until they, their own



folk, were driven out onto the public roads as beggars and then onto the transport ships as convicts for the plantations.

The lack of English jurisdiction would have been the very reason for their journey through the swamps and their presence in the south. But outside of Christendom, did they miss the European culture of Virginia? Always poor in material things, they would have brought much that was dear to them in their heads; it could have been expressed as well at a fishfry on the beach of Albemarle Sound as in the servants' quarters or squatters camps of Virginia. They could not have much missed the sight of their master's mansion, or the sounds of a ball and feast within, or the library they had never seen. Fugitive Irish would have missed the Mass no more than in Virginia where it was forbidden. As for those whose families had been christened, married and buried by the Church of England in accord with custom and law, it is a fact that the seventeenth century records of North Carolina contain less evidence of pious lay devotion to the church than of the practice of occult folk traditions. If need was felt for charismatic religious ceremonies, the rituals of their hosts were available. Most of the fugitives' own ways would have continued; the absence of the rest of Christian civilization might have been felt as no great loss so long as the absent included English courts, militia and sheriff.

The country between the Dismal Swamp and Albemarle Sound, hell for planters, was a fugitive's paradise. It is more reasonable to suppose that it was the latter who braved the hardships to get there and to stay.

Four students of the history of this colony, a small fraction of all who have written on the subject, long ago stated their agreement with this conclusion, whether reasoning from the state of pre-colonial Carolina, the social conditions in Virginia, or the nature of North Carolina society in the second generation. In the eighteenth century, a century after the settlement, the records of the communes of the Moravian sect in North Carolina stated that the first settlers of the colony were fugitives from Virginia, some in flight from personal problems, but the general migration social, escape from servitude, poverty, debt or prosecution under Virginia's stern criminal code.<sup>43</sup> The amateur historian of Currituck County, a part of the region of original settlement, began his lifelong search into the lore and records of his county in the 1840s, and concluded that the first settlers were a kind who did not care about secure land titles any more than they cared about clear political jurisdiction. Speaking of his region he said, "I am persuaded it was smartly peopled up by squatters."<sup>44</sup> Another opinion, well-informed though not precisely identifying the settlers as fugitives, comes close to that conclusion, and flatly contradicts the opinion that

the immigration was composed of planters and farmers. From a lifetime of effort in constructing family trees, the twentieth century genealogist of another part of the original settlement, Perquimans County, characterized the first settlers as "nameless" folk. Both county historians emphasize the Swamp and other difficulties of the terrain as determinants of the type of settler.<sup>45</sup>

Although virtually all historians of North Carolina have considered charges that the later colony was a haven for fugitives, very few have related this problem to the question of origin. One, who did at the end of the nineteenth century, was the state's historian of slavery. He saw the swamps and forests as a natural sanctuary for Virginia's runaway indentured servants in the seventeenth century as well as later.<sup>46</sup> The other who related fugitives to origin was an erudite social historian of the mid-nineteenth century. He emphasized that "rogues" (vagrants) played a significant part in the original settlement:

Into this middle ground, this 'no-man's land', we are expressly told emigrants came from Virginia, because it was under *no government*; some of them may have been rogues, probably they were.<sup>47</sup>

With no sympathy for fugitives or Poor Whites, he adds that the poor education and "vicious habits" of some of the poor of his state may have begun with "The early settlement of Albemarle, by runagates from Virginia, before Albemarle was part of North Carolina . . .," (that is, the early settlement north of Albemarle Sound, by runaways from Virginia, before that region became an official colony).<sup>48</sup>

The preceding conclusions were probably influenced by knowledge of the social order in Virginia as well as conditions to the south, as is the conclusion offered in the present study.

It is well known that the Southern plantation economy of the seventeenth century rested upon indentured servitude as its source of labor; the enslavement of Africans did not become prominent until the next century. The standard comprehensive work upon the bondage of European indentured servants has shown that their lot was similar to that of Black slaves in their legal status as property, living conditions, plantation controls including corporal punishment, legal codes regulating conduct, and efforts to resist.<sup>49</sup> The crucial difference between the two systems of servitude was that the indentured was bound for a term of years only, while the Black slave was bound for life and transmitted his status to his children. Like Black slaves of the next centuries, the indentured servants were a potentially dangerous class, feared by those who ruled their labor. In Virginia, Charles Andrews tells

The difference between the system of a runaway being applied to each



us, "... severe laws were to restrain the habits and practices of the particular brand of settlers that had come to the colony from the jails, bawdy-houses and slums of London."<sup>50</sup> Calling poor women of three centuries ago whores is a gratuitous expression of bias, but otherwise the statement is supported by other studies. Most immigrants to America were Britain's poor, bound in servitude, and many especially in the southern plantations were convict labor. Wesley Craven adds, also in accord with other studies, that an increasing number of servants, often the "baser" English elements, without the responsibility of liberty and property, tried to escape from their hard lot.<sup>51</sup> Sometimes more than one bondsman escaped at the same time. Just a little too late to consider in connection with the first settlement of Carolina was the planned uprising of the indentured servants of York, Middlesex and Gloucester Counties, Virginia, in 1663. Their plan was to seize arms, kill those who opposed them, and demand freedom in Virginia or the guarantee of safe conduct to leave the country to settle elsewhere.<sup>52</sup>

Indentured servants who did escape found freedom only by flight into the wilderness, isolating themselves in pine barrens or the back country.<sup>53</sup> Their survival suggests that Native Americans did not consider them a part of their enemy, and that the fugitives did not behave towards the Native Americans in the customary manner of free settlers. 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

The practical alliance of fugitives and Native Americans which reached its high point in North Carolina in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries began very early after the settlement of Virginia. At Jamestown a blockhouse was built on the narrow neck of land which connected the tiny colony with the mainland. The purpose of the fort was not to fight off the attacks of Native Americans only. Reported Captain John Smith in a list of his accomplishments as Governor of Virginia:

... to stop the disorders of our disorderly theeues and the Salvages [thieves and savages], built a blocke house in the necke of our Ile, kept by a garrison to entertaine the Salvages trace, and none to passe or repasse, Salvage nor Christian, without the Presidents (Governor's) order ...

Judging from the latter phrases, it appears that the fort was built to prevent the escape of indentured servants as well as the return in arms of those who had already escaped to the mainland.

This was in 1609, two years after the founding of the first permanent English colony in America.<sup>54</sup> Desperate indentured servants practically stepped off the gangplank into the woods. Such immediate



eagerness to brave the unknown, to suffer wilderness life and try the good will of natives as alternative to servitude, suggests that not all the persons missing or reported dead from the "Indian Wars" and starving and sickness times of the 1610s and 1620s<sup>55</sup> went underground in the literal sense.

Wilderness locations inside Virginia offered some security. The region below the Dismal Swamp outside Virginia offered much more. With such motivation and such advantage beckoning, it would be strange if an unauthorized settlement had not developed south of Virginia by the middle decades of the seventeenth century.

Technically this settlement prior to 1665 was maroon. The old world origins of the people, most European, some African, are irrelevant to the definition: Fugitives from servitude who established a hidden settlement. The settlement will not however be treated as a normative maroon community in this book, because it ceased to be maroon during the major portion of its history, the forty-nine years ending in 1714. These moreover are the years in which there are more sources, though still sparse, for the history of this people. After 1665 the fugitives and their children became the citizens of the official colony of North Carolina, still isolated, but no longer hidden. Yet the heritage of their origin rendered precarious the maintaining of their own social order and their domination of the colonial government. This fundamental insecurity was evidenced by continuing attacks upon their regime, and its final overthrow. Then it was that the maroon heritage re-asserted itself, responding to the crisis, with a remnant of the destroyed society founding the maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp. All in all, from its most probable origin and its fate, it is North Carolina among the original thirteen United States which most merits the name the Maroon State.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), vol. 1, pp. 10, 17, 17n., 49, 94-96, 94 n., 300-302, 301 n., 305, 308-09, 311-13, 329, 331-34, 339-42, 339 n., 350, 361-63, 365, 376-77, 396, 406-08, 424-29.

<sup>2</sup> The border lands of Wales and Cornwall.

<sup>3</sup> The word colored in this study refers to groups whose identification by themselves or others has emphasized their plural ancestry, African, Native American or European.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, New ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> David Beer Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages*, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), vol. 1, pp. 251–52, 255. Audiencia of Santo Domingo to the Crown (Santo Domingo: February 24, 1586), p. 35; “The Sack of the City of Cartagena, Done by Francis Drake, Englishman” (n.p.: n.d.), p. 52; Pedro Fernandez de Busto to the Audiencia at Panama (Turbaco: March 12, 1586), p. 54; Alonzo Suarez de Toledo to the Crown (Havana June 27, 1586), p. 173; Octavius Toscano, Statement (Cartagena: July 28, 1586), p. 195; Diego Fernandez de Quinones to Crown (Havana: September 1586), p. 204; Juan de Posada to the Crown (San Augustin: September 2, 1586), p. 206; Pedro Sanchez, Summary Deposition (Havana: n.d.), p. 212; in *Further English Voyages to Spanish America: 1583–1594*, ed. Irene A. Wright (London: Hakluyt Society, 1951). Estimates for the West Africans are 100, 150 and 250.

<sup>6</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 255.

<sup>7</sup> Wesley Frank Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the 17th Century, 1607–1689*, 2d ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 317. See also Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 195, and *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. lx–x (William L. Saunders, ed., Preface).

<sup>8</sup> Lindley S. Butler, “The Early Settlement of Carolina: Virginia’s Southern Frontier,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 79 (January 1971): 23. Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, 4 vols. (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1968–74), vol. 2, North Carolina Higher Court Records, 1670–1696 (sub-series vol. 1), p. xv. William S. Powell, ed., *Ye Countie of Albemarle in Carolina: A Collection of Documents, 1664–1675* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1958), pp. xv–xxiv. The new series of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* has been thus listed in previous bibliographies. But libraries have catalogued volume one as a separate work, and the remaining volumes as a series. The consequence is that the series appears incomplete in the catalogue or upon the reader’s receipt of the books.

<sup>9</sup> 1665, the date in which colonial government arrived in North Carolina, is used in this study rather than 1663, the date in which the Carolina charter was granted.

<sup>10</sup> “Examination of Witnesses in Nansimund County” (March 25, 1708: Henry Plumpton), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 676.



<sup>11</sup> Edward Bland, "The Discovery of New Brittain, 1650," in *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708*, ed. Alexander S. Salley, Jr. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 9-11, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Yeardley, "Narrative of Excursions into Carolina, 1654," in *Narratives*, ed. Salley, pp. 25, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) p. 32. Powell, Countie of Albermarle, p. xxviii. The former suggests over 500, the latter considerably less than the 4000 estimated for 1675. Saunders, in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. x, sees no reason to believe population growth was rapid, implying a rather large population for the pre-colonial settlement.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812), vol. 1, pp. 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Blount Chesire, "First Settlers in North Carolina not Religious Refugees," *The North Carolina Booklet* 5 (April 1906): 247. Stephen Beauregard Weeks, *The Religious Development in the Province of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 10, nos. 5-6 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1892), pp. 9-11. The historians were Francois-Xavier Martin, John H. Wheeler, Francis L. Hawks, George Bancroft and John W. Moore. Other motives however were also suggested by Wheeler (escape from debts and taxes) and Hawks (escape from indentured servitude). The works of the five are cited as they pertain to the substance of the present study.

<sup>16</sup> John Blair, "Mr. Blair's Mission to North Carolina" (1704); James Adams, "Mr. Adams to the Secretary" (September 18, 1708); in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 601-02, 686.

<sup>17</sup> William Edmundson, *A Journal of the Life . . .*, 2d ed. (London: Mary Hinde, 1774), p. 68. The myth of Quaker fugitives was demolished in a pamphlet by Bishop Chesire of the Episcopal Church of North Carolina and its demise publicized by William Saunders in his preface to the first volume of the Colonial Records of North Carolina, both in 1886. The Bishop amplified his study in "Settlers not Religious Refugees," pp. 247, 249, 253-54, 256. The best summaries of this historiographic development are in Stephen Beauregard Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, extra vol. 15 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), p. 35 and his *Religious Development*, pp. 9-11, 22-29.

<sup>18</sup> William Gordon, "Mr. Gordon to the Secretary" (May 13, 1709), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 710.

<sup>19</sup> Besides authors of monographs and editors of documents, these have been the historians of the state: Samuel A'Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Nappen, 1908), vol. 1, p. 59; R. D. W. Connor, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), vol. 1, p. 25; Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray



Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Press, 1963), pp. 12, 15. See also Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 31–32, 191. The latter two works interweave the themes of the search for good land and the naturalness of the process of expansion, the absence of any unusual factors. The exception to the prevalent interpretation is Powell, *Countie of Albemarle*, pp. xxi–xxii, which emphasizes the first settlement by fur traders, Indian peddlers and small farmers, and argues that large planters would not have forgone their comforts to emigrate. This is consonant with the present study, except that more serious obstacles are here pointed out, as well as a motive for those who did migrate. General colonial historians have not taken up the question of motivation for settlement in their consideration of North Carolina.

<sup>20</sup> "Representation to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina concerning the Rebellion in That Country to Be Made Use of in Further Examinations" (1679), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 260–61. Craven, *Southern Colonies*, pp. 409. The bias of the former to prosecute rebels, is not pertinent to the authenticity of the description of the countryside.

<sup>21</sup> Blair, "Mission," vol. 1, p. 600. Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 247. Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the 17th Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1907), vol. 2, p. 234. Arthur Pierce Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Va.: Mariners' Museum, 1953), p. 201. See also Chapter 10, notes 9 and 10.

<sup>22</sup> "Representation concerning the Rebellion"; "The Case between Thomas Miller Collector of His Majts Customes & Capt. Zachariah Gilham Culpeper Durant Craford & Others Principal Autors & Actors in ye Late Comotion and Disturbances that Were in the Northern Part of the Province of Carolina" (1680); in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 260–61, 287. Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 247. Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, pp. 52–53. Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 1st. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 40. Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, pp. 115, 172, 201.

<sup>23</sup> For the absence of European authority: "A Letter to Sir William Berkeley" (September 8, 1663 [from the Lords Proprietors of Carolina]), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 52–54. Daniel Defoe, "Party-Tyranny" (London: 1705) in *Narratives*, ed. Salley, p. 228. William P. Cumming, "The Earliest Permanent Settlement in Carolina: Nathaniel Batts and the Comberford Map," *American Historical Review* 45 (October 1939): 82. See also note 5, above. None of the studies discuss the implications of Native American rule or lack of European rule. For lower taxes as a motive: Ashe, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 61. For cheaper land: Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 25. Leonidas Dodson, *Alexander Spotswood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), p. 17. Butler, "Early Settlement," p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, "To the Secretary"; John Urmston, "Mr. Urmston's Letter" (July 7, 1711) in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 715, 764. Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 249. Craven, *Southern Colonies*, p. 409.

<sup>25</sup> Wesley Frank Craven, *The Colonies in Transition, 1660-1713* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> Butler, "Early Settlement," p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> See below, Chapter 10, note 12.

<sup>28</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, rev. ed., pp. 12, 16.

<sup>30</sup> "The Governor and Council in Virginia to the Lords [Commissioners for the affairs of Virginia]" (March 6, 1632), in "Virginia in 1632," ed. Robert C. Johnson, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (October 1957): 465.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Chandlee Forman, "The Bygone 'Subberbs of James Cittie'," *William and Mary Quarterly* 20 (October 1940): 480. This and the previous work are cited in Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), vol. 1, p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>33</sup> Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Virginia under Charles I and Cromwell, 1625-1660* (Williamsburg: Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957), p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 1, p. 206.

<sup>35</sup> Washburn, *Virginia under Charles I*, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>37</sup> Nell Marion Nugent, ed., *Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1800* (Richmond: Dietz Printing Co., 1934), pp. 425-29. John Bennett Boddie, *Seventeenth Century Isle of Wight County, Virginia* (Chicago: Chicago Law Printing Co., 1938), pp. 124-25. William Perry Johnson and Russell E. Bidlack, "North Carolina Land Grants (1663-1700)," *The North Carolinian: A Quarterly Journal of Genealogy and History* 1 (June 1955): 43.

<sup>38</sup> Butler, "Early Settlement," p. 28 n.

<sup>39</sup> Boddie, *Isle of Wight*, p. 125. Elizabeth Gregory McPherson, ed., "Nathaniell Batts, Landholder on Pasquotank River, 1660," *North Carolina Historical Review* 43 (January 1966): 81n. The leader was George Durant, who appears in the later history.

<sup>40</sup> Washburn, *Virginia under Charles I*, p. 50.

<sup>41</sup> Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>42</sup> Notes 19-22 above. For a 1679 description of the country as a natural sanctuary for fugitives, see Chapter 4, note 26.

<sup>43</sup> H. B. Ansell, Summary History of Currituck County. Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library, p. 25. The Library has catalogued this manuscript as volume 2 of Ansell manuscripts.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Ellen Winslow, *History of Perquimans County* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1931), p. 2. For terrain: *Ibid.*, p. 1. Ansell, Currituck County, pp. 7–8.

<sup>46</sup> John Spencer Bassett, *Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 14, nos. 4–5 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2 p.148.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>49</sup> Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607–1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

<sup>50</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 1, p. 116.

<sup>51</sup> Craven, *Southern Colonies*, p. 215.

<sup>52</sup> Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, vol. 1, p. 197.

<sup>53</sup> Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, p. 156.

<sup>54</sup> John Smith, *Works*, ed. Edward Arber (Birmingham, England: English Scholar's Library, 1884), p. 154. Captain John Smith has been considered a great liar, but he achieves no aggrandizement of reputation by a casual mention of "our thieves" among the hostile Native Americans.

<sup>55</sup> For one summary of the Starving Time and attendant chaos, see Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 1, pp. 110, 136.



## Chapter 2

### The Old Governor, His Medicine Dance: Independent Roanoke and Its Native American Neighbors

The first settlers south of Virginia had a name for the land into which they moved. It wasn't Carolana, the name of the old, never activated Carolina grant. It wasn't "the southern plantations," the wishful, unreal term used by Virginia in her ambition. The settlers called their new country Roanoke, after the Native American name for the great bay that marked the farthest extent of the immigrant settlement. As early as 1609 Virginians had referred to the isolated body of water beyond their borders as "The Sea of Rawnocke."<sup>1</sup> Applied to the land between the bay and Virginia, the name appeared in print in England in 1649, perhaps reflecting the beginning of the unauthorized settlement. It was listed along with the two official colonies of the South: "... the rich and Healthy Countries of Roanock, the new Plantations of Virginia and Maryland"<sup>2</sup> Use of the name Roanoke was a turning away from Virginia. Settlers faced their bay, the fifty-mile canoe way which linked their rivers, the shallow waters that were a guarantee of isolation.

Through changes of official nomenclature the settlers stubbornly held to the name they had chosen for their country. The Lords Proprietors of the new colony of Carolina declared the name of the northern portion to be Albemarle, the name of the bay Albemarle Sound. Later the Proprietors called the northern territory North Carolina. But it was still Roanoke and Roanoke Sound to the settlers. Observers from England were much perplexed by the conflict of names and the local attitude behind it. An official survey of the colonies in the 1690s reported that "Roanoak lyes betwixt Virginia and Carolina," as if

the region were still outside the colonies. The official tried again and came closer to the mark: "North Carolina lies between Virginia and South-Carolina: It has two Settlements, th' one call'd Roanoak, the other Pamplico, 100 miles distant from each other."<sup>3</sup> He was still under the spell of settler usage, for when the Lords Proprietors separated the governments of South and North Carolina, the northern portion of the latter continued officially to be called Albemarle.

As late as the 1710s an ecclesiastical agent resident in South Carolina heard the official names of the sister colony to the north so rarely that he seems to have been unaware of any name save that still used by the settlers. In his correspondence, over a five year period, there are eight references: to the colony of Renouque, the men of Renouque, the Tuscarora War in Renouque, and even to the Governor of Renouque.<sup>4</sup> After fifty years of the colony's official existence and three official names, the old pre-colonial name was still the one used by the people.

The tenacity of the name Roanoke is evidence of the intense localism that we would expect from the special beginnings of this colony. The old Roanoke settlement was independent in its origin, in the sentiments of its settlers, and as will now be shown, in another more formal respect. Rather than remaining an informal community without clear-cut and accepted structure, the first settlers had organized their own government, the most extreme indication of their attitude towards Virginia and the authority of England. Before the establishment of colonial government in 1665, Roanoke was an independent if informal republic.

True, the Tuscaroras and their client nations were the ultimate sovereigns at that time. But this did not forbid the immigrant community from organizing its own government subject to the suzerainty of the hosts. Native Americans welcomed settlers when their good will was established but did not consider them members of the tribal organization unless they learned and adopted Native American culture as a whole and sealed the process with the ceremony of adoption. For immigrants who did not, it was undoubtedly a convenience to the Native Americans that there was an official spokesman to the paramount ruler of the Tuscaroras and the other kings. Such autonomous self-government, without need for foreign or military departments, constituted no threat to the Native Americans so long as it was totally independent of European powers.

There are two pieces of evidence that the unauthorized immigrant community established a Government of Roanoke before the English colonial government of Carolina. One is the report that there had been a Governor of Roanoke. The other is recognition by the Lords Proprietors of Carolina of the continuing political autonomy of the old settlement.



It was George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement, who during a missionary journey south of Virginia in 1672 recorded in his journal his meeting with:

Nathaniel Batts, formerly Governor of Roanoke, who goeth by the name of Captain Batts, who hath been a rude desperate man who hath a great command over the country, especially over the Indians.

Fox also referred to him as "The Old Governor," and reported his moving "up and down among the people in the country," still exercising his "great command over the country" despite formal retirement in 1665.<sup>5</sup> This was the Nathaniel Batts who had established a fur trade station at Roanoke Island in 1654 and three years later had removed his headquarters to the far western end of Roanoke Sound.

The place is marked "Batts House" on a 1657 map of the still pre-colonial region. The specialist in early Southeastern maps explains why this site only was identified, when we know that there were many settlers with their homes in the region. This was the establishment of most importance to the settlement; its prominence on the map verifies Fox's report of the prominence of the man. This was the place which a voyager to the region would be well advised to visit first.

The historian of maps also offers two indications that there may have been a cluster of settlers' homes close about the Batts House. In 1676 the Lords Proprietors of Carolina suggested this site as location for one of three port towns (the others at Roanoke Island and midway along the Sound); in 1679 a map showed a concentration of houses at the same location.<sup>6</sup> But a recent historian, an advocate of the idea of natural plantation expansion from Virginia, disputes the suggestion that immigrants settled around the Batts House, finding the reasoning insufficient or the evidence of too late a date.<sup>7</sup> He is likely to be correct that there was no village. There were none in that colony later in the seventeenth century, and few in the eighteenth. But the dispute is semantic not substantive. A settlement need not be a village. Settlers' homes were miles apart in Roanoke; they could have been a little closer yet still far apart in the Batts House neighborhood. More significantly, the 1657 map remains evidence that Batts House was an important center for the whole Roanoke region, and casts additional light on Nathaniel Batts' position as Governor of Roanoke.

Though there has been little discussion of Fox's identification of a pre-colonial governor, and none concerning the independence which this implies, many historians have mentioned his statement, and none have rejected its validity, except the same historian who expressed skepticism

regarding a Batts House settlement. His position is that there is no evidence that Batts ever held the office "officially," though as a local leader he may have been acknowledged as "governor" by the settlers, and is gratefully remembered by North Carolina as first citizen and an important founder.<sup>8</sup> Again apparent disagreement is semantic. Of course he was not an officially appointed governor by Virginia or any other English authority. But there are less as well as more formal modes of government, governors other than English or European, and other means of official appointment, such as a regular, recognized, agreed-upon selection by a self-constituted community, through election, acclamation or consensus.

The Fox testimonies, with support from the 1657 map, suggest that there had been an organized pre-colonial government. Recognition by the Lords Proprietors of a continuing autonomy for the old settler region, when considered together with Fox's witness, is conclusive.

Upon receiving their grant for Carolina from Charles II in 1663, the Lords Proprietors immediately wrote one of their number, Sir William Berkeley, then Governor of Virginia, commissioning and instructing him to organize a government for the new colony. They authorized him to form not one but two governments for their territory of "Albemarle." This strange suggestion would appear worthy of study,<sup>9</sup> even if we did not also know that there had been an unauthorized settlement there, and a person called the Governor of Roanoke. Perhaps a reason for neglect of this question has been an impression that the proposed dual regimes were related to the Proprietors' division of their colony into North and South Carolina. But this is not the case. Berkeley's mandate was for Albemarle only, or what was to be North Carolina.

The Proprietors explained their reasons for the proposal. They were aware that an unauthorized settlement already existed, they desired these settlers to remain as citizens of the new colony, which had no other immigrants thus far, they understood that the existing community held peculiar social or cultural values, and they therefore proposed that the settlers be granted a government of their own. The Proprietors hoped for new and more conventional immigrants for the territory south of Albemarle Sound. They very cogently feared that old and new settlers would be incompatible, that a single government for both might oppress one at the expense of the other, or be torn between two types of society. After informing Berkeley that the previous inoperative Carolina grant had been officially nullified, the Proprietors said:

Besides we have many more advantages then is in the other to incorrage the undertakers, we are informed that



there some people settled on the north east parte of the river Chowan and that others have inclynations to plant there, as also on the Larboard side entring of the same river . . .

. . . the reason of giving you power to settle two Governors that is of each side of the river one, is because some persons that are for liberty of Contience may desire a Governor of there owne proposing, which those of the other side of the river may not so well like, and our designe being to incorage those people to plant abroad and to stock well these parts with planters: inciteth us to comply alwayse and with all sorts of persons, as far as possibly we cann . . .<sup>10</sup>

If desired by the old settlers, their autonomy was to be constitutionally complete: two Governors, two Governor's Councils, and two Assemblies of freemen or their elected delegates, a set for each jurisdiction, that of the old settlers, and that of the prospective new.<sup>11</sup> The old settlement and its projected government would be characterized by the settlers' desire for "liberty of Contience"; the Proprietors appear to have assumed that conventional planters settling to the south of Albemarle Sound would prefer a conservative social and political order, with a dominant Established Church, the Church of England, as was already the case in Virginia, and would be later in the Colony of South Carolina.

The liberty of conscience granted to the old settlement, and stated by the Proprietors to be the reason for the proposed autonomy, cannot refer to any church preferences on the part of the settlers, for we have seen that they were adherents of no organized religion. The settlers opposed the Church of England or any other state church, not to follow their own chosen churches, but because they were powerfully uninterested in all forms of church religion. The Proprietors appear to have gotten wind of this phenomenon in their prior investigations of their grant. In an era when wars were waged in the name of competing organized religions, when for twenty years Englishmen had been slaughtering each other under the banners of Church of England, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Sectarian, a community of the irreligious, subsistence farmers not philosophers, was indeed a wonder. Such a community, to protect its values, social order and culture, required "liberty of conscience" in an exceptionally broad and radical sense. The awareness of the Proprietors that they were dealing with a

peculiar people is suggested by their statement of a desire to get along with "all sorts of persons," a phrase tinged with distaste.

The Lords Proprietors of Carolina were far-sighted in their proposal of two governments for the unusual and the conventional settlements in the north of their grant. For fifty years there were to be unending political conflicts between old settlers and new conventional immigrants, and two major armed confrontations. But the dual governments were not installed; North Carolina became a single colony with one set of political institutions for both Roanoke or Albemarle and the other still unsettled regions. The old settlers did not avail themselves of the Proprietors' offer of "a Governor of there owne proposing" for their own region, probably a reference to the old Governor of Roanoke, Nathaniel Batts. Instead they relied on the enlightened self-interest of the Proprietors to provide governors sympathetic to old settler interests, or to support the settlers in the event of a falling out between governor and people. In a unified colony of North Carolina the old settlers were the only citizens at first, and remained a majority into the eighteenth century. Thus through the elected Assembly they gained control of the wider territory, and were in a position to discourage settlement of the 'wrong' kind of immigrants when natural deterrents did not suffice.<sup>12</sup> Though the unitary solution for the government of northern Carolina led to ceaseless political turmoil and social conflict as the Proprietors had feared,<sup>13</sup> it provided the old settlers with the constitutional authority and territorial jurisdiction to maintain their political domination and preserve their social order for nearly half a century.

Light is cast upon the level of political development achieved by the old Roanoke community from 'he evident concern of the Lords Proprietors before they sent in a governor of their own appointment in 1665. Whether the Proprietors' information came directly from Roanoke or at second hand, they perceived that community as united in its system of values and as prepared not only to elect an assembly but also to choose its own governor. As the Proprietors state, their extraordinary evaluation and concession arose from their desire to win the community's fealty and to relate with a minimum of friction. The Proprietors' proposal that Roanoke be entirely self-governing as well as autonomous from the rest of Carolina lends striking support to George Fox's assertion. Independent Roanoke had possessed government before the colony was established.

Surely the details of the pre-colonial government of Roanoke will remain forever unknown. We can guess from the environment that it was a simple government, and from the character of the settlers that it rested upon 'common sense' principles, not traditional English law. Yet



a few political institutions are implicit. With a Governor of Roanoke prior to the Colony of Carolina, there was also necessarily an assembly of the immigrant settlement, at least in the classic Greek sense of the whole body of citizens: that gathering or consultation among settlers, however informal, which initially recognized and continued to recognize Nathaniel Batts as Governor. It is highly improbable that this assembly of such a people never again consulted, leaving its affairs in the hands of a single ruler without review. It is more reasonable to suppose that the settlers considered the first colonial Assembly in 1665 or shortly thereafter to be the continuation of their old government under new auspices, just as the Lords Proprietors considered their new colony to be the regularization of an old and still autonomous settlement. With a Governor and an assembly of the people who chose him, independent Roanoke must also have had its laws, or agreed-upon customs, its methods of enforcing them and its ways of settling disputes, all the essential functions of government.

According to this view the chief effect of the transition to colony was not upon the autonomy or self-government of Roanoke, but upon its allegiance. Formerly the ultimate sovereign had been the Tuscarora Empire and its allied or client nations. Now both the Roanoke Government and the Native American nations were to owe their higher allegiance to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina under charter from the King of England, while they continued to enjoy self-government for local affairs, which in those days of slow communications meant for most practical purposes.

Only William Cumming, the cartographical historian of Batts House, has directly stated that the pre-colonial settlement possessed a government of its own.<sup>14</sup> Three other historians however offered their opinion that the official colony had political roots antedating its establishment in 1665. They did not refer to Governor Batts or the Proprietors' proposal for two governments, but spoke from their general familiarity with the history. The collector and editor of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina* stated:

The Lords Proprietors . . . distinctly recognized . . . the fact, not only that a settlement had already been "begann" but that it had progressed far enough to need a fully organized government of its own.<sup>15</sup>

Charles Andrews said, speaking of the later struggle between old settlers and new immigrants of a more conventional sort:

This struggle had begun very early before 1676. In a sense it had been latent from the beginning. The settlers who had come to the colony before the authority of the proprietors was established had never taken kindly to interference by this outside group.<sup>16</sup>

Stephen B. Weeks came closest to affirming that pre-colonial Roanoke had had a government, but like the others did not give his reasons. After characterizing his State as a growth, not a creation, and referring to the pre-colonial settlement as a no-man's land, he emphasized that there had been no authorized government and added:

... it is not probable that the settlers were entirely without civil organization.<sup>17</sup>

The most positive historical impressions of the continuing self-rule of the Colony, which imply or even state the prior viability of an independent Roanoke Government, are from two English political leaders of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The more authoritative source for the radical autonomy of the Roanoke Government after 1665 and implicitly before, was the foremost of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, Lord Shaftesbury, who spoke in the name of his fellow Proprietors. At a treason trial of alleged North Carolina rebels held in England in 1680, he testified that the government of Albemarle had never legally been under the jurisdiction of the Proprietors. The effect of this testimony was dismissal of the case. There can be no treason against a government that has no legal standing. Shaftesbury undoubtedly had practical, political motives for his astonishing declaration and his support of persons who had risen in arms against colonial officials. He probably sought to maintain good relations between the Proprietors and the old settlers of Roanoke who had engaged in the tumult; perhaps he also desired to remove civil struggles in North Carolina from the purview of English courts, lest that lead to strengthening of English overseeing and weakening of the Proprietors' prerogative.

Yet the substance of his argument cannot be dismissed as frivolous, coming as it does from a great statesman, on behalf of powerful colleagues, on such a solemn occasion. The report of the Shaftesbury testimony is by a much dismayed official, an Englishman, who had been violently ejected from his office by the people of Roanoke, and now found the 'rebels' exonerated by the Proprietors.



Nevertheless may it please yor Matie [Majesty] at ye said Tryal ye Earl of Shaftesbury who had been present at ye aforesd Transactions of ye Comtee & had been ye mouth of ye Lords Proprietors in ye whole affaire unexpectedly appeared at ye Tryall as a witness for Ye Deft [Defendant] & after that by 5 witnesses ye said Culpeper had been proved guilty of all ye said Treasons before numerated to ye satisfaction both of ye Court and Jury, Ye said Lord Shaftesbury in his Testimony for ye prisonr declared that there hath been no legall Governmt ever settled in Albemarle & that neither ye said Govr [Governor] nor Governmt were legall according to ye Constitutions of Carolina and that therefore ye taking of Armes & acting against them could not amount to Treason, But that ye Parliament thus called by ye Rabble was a legall Parliamt by the Constitutions of Carolina ye people having a right to choose them at two years end without any call . . . whereupon ye prisonr was acquitted by ye Jury and Court . . .<sup>18</sup>

One can imagine the chagrin of a staff of officials appointed out from England by the Lords Proprietors, when those same Proprietors informed them that they had no redress against the rising of the people since no government in North Carolina had been legal. Shaftesbury was not of course questioning the legality of the Carolina grant by Charles II, nor the legal authority of the Proprietors, but only of the government that ruled at Albemarle. It is also clear that he was not denying that there had been a government there for fifteen years, which passed as the government of an English proprietary colony, and with which the Proprietors had regularly dealt, including the appointment of its governors and other officials. What Shaftesbury was denying was the regularity, the authenticity of that government under the Proprietors' never-enforced paper constitutions for the colony and thus under the royal grant and ultimately under English law.

The overturned officials were betrayed by their employers for political advantage, and the argument successfully advanced that treason cannot be committed against a non-legal government was a technical one, yet there was more to Shaftesbury's testimony than Machiavellian tactics. To establish a flaw in the credentials of the deposed officials it was necessary to show only that there were irregularities in the current North Carolina government, not to show that there had never been a legal government, as Shaftesbury averred. He was no fool, and his testimony was in accord with whatever collective wisdom existed

among the Proprietors. He must have been willing to stand upon the constitutional history of non-legal government in Albemarle which he advanced.

In substance Shaftesbury was stating that there had been continuous elected Assemblies legislating in Albemarle and a continuous line of Governors and Governor's Councils appointed by the Proprietors, but that none of these had been legal. The entire political process had been without foundation in law; the local policies for assessing and collecting quitrents (feudal dues); the procedures of selling and registering land; the Assembly's compliance and non-compliance with the suggestions of the Proprietors; the Proprietors' approval and disapproval of enactments by the Assembly; the appointment and election of officials. All these, according to Shaftesbury's reading of the history, had been conducted, not under constitutional law or the binding rule of sovereigns and subjects, but by common consent, practically by free contract. In law, Albemarle had never been a dependent province, never a colony, proprietary or English. The foundation of its government was local and practical. The relation between settlers and Proprietors was voluntary, a matter of convenience.

So far as English law was concerned, it was perfectly permissible for the Lords Proprietors to keep North Carolina in legal limbo. The powers granted to the Proprietors of Carolina were almost monarchical, and under the grant they were free to establish radical democracy, feudal absolutism or no government at all. This limbo would have been welcome to the Roanokers, as a most extreme form of self-government and autonomy, if they were the independent minded folk, impatient with outside interference, that the records indicate. Albemarle's anomalous legal status could also be useful to the Proprietors, as it appears to have been in the case of the treason trial. It allowed large scope for change of policy. And the ambiguity of government-no-government was frustrating to those empowered by king or parliament who would pry into the private preserve of the Proprietors of Carolina and the settlers of Roanoke. There is every indication that Shaftesbury's sweeping *dictum*, "There hath been no legall Government ever settled in Albemarle," was the product of the Proprietors' philosophy of accommodation, and their acquaintance with the history of Roanoke's exercise of self-determination from the beginning.

A generation later, Shaftesbury's historical understanding of Roanoke was echoed, radicalized and explicitly extended back to the pre-colonial settlement by England's most brilliant practitioner of politics. Daniel Defoe, today known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe*, was a secret agent of the political party or grouping of factions in the English Parliament which supported the Lords Proprietors and therefore the old



settler regime in North Carolina against those who would turn that jurisdiction into a Royal colony on the model of Virginia. Defoe was employed by the leader of the Country-and-Low-Tory grouping in Parliament to write essays which did not reveal their partisan bias and to tour England on clandestine political missions. Defoe and the leaders of his faction received their information on Carolina affairs from one of their number, Carolina Governor John Archdale, the leading Proprietor of Carolina in his day, and a warm friend of the old settler community in Roanoke. In 1705 Defoe wrote a pamphlet, *Party-Tyranny*, in defense of the old settler party in North Carolina, and a perhaps somewhat similar party in South Carolina. He stated:

There were Inhabitants in Carolina before the Grant made to the present Proprietors which Inhabitants had a Right both to the Government as well as Possession; which King Charles the Second, neither did, nor cou'd grant by Charter, or otherwise to any Body.<sup>19</sup>

This was not an attack upon the Proprietors (who were among Defoe's sponsors), but a radical declaration that the inhabitants of Roanoke, unlike those of the other colonies, had entered into a voluntary association with the Proprietors which no third party, King or Parliament, could abrogate. Politically it was an attempt to strengthen the defense of the proprietary status of Carolina against now strenuous efforts to revoke the charter, by adding the human rights or claims to prior settlement of the Roanoke community to the property rights of the Proprietors. The "social contract" here claimed is no theory, but a specific historical event, the consent of the old Roanoke Government to cooperate with the Lords Proprietors of Carolina: The old settlers had both the "Right" and the "Possession." Shaftesbury's and Defoe's statements, one near the beginning, the other near the end of proprietorial rule, and both made on behalf of the Proprietors, appear to be acknowledgments of the history of an independent Roanoke, which in this study has been established from George Fox's *Journal* and the Proprietors' original proposals for the government at Albemarle.

The most important influence upon the distinctive development of North Carolina up to 1714 was the origin of the settlement as a sanctuary for fugitives, accompanied by independent government, later by an exceptional degree of colonial autonomy. The next most important influence upon the history of Albemarle or Roanoke was the continuing positive relationship between Native Americans and settlers. The dependence of the immigrants upon the ultimate sovereignty of the Native American nations for their security and independence has been

discussed. Before and during the colonial rule of the Lords Proprietors there were other significant forms of relationship between settlers and Native Americans: the basis of land tenure, community decisions for war or peace, personal connections of family or friendship, and cultural interchange. The general relationship between the two peoples was to culminate in 1714 with the overthrow of old settler political power. This heralded the destruction of the Tuscarora Nation in Carolina, and the Tuscarora War against the new regime received at least passive support from the defeated Roanoke settler community.

The name of Nathaniel Batts is prominent in the fragmentary sources for the history of Roanoke. His office as governor of a pre-colonial settlement has been considered; his legendary life as symbol of cultural interchange will be examined; his name is also the most prominent in the context of Native American land grants to Roanoke settlers. The first known formal grant south of Virginia, conveyed by any authority, was to Nathaniel Batts, for land along the Pasquotank River between the Dismal Swamp and Roanoke Sound, By Kiscutanewh, King of the Yeopims, on September 24, 1660.<sup>20</sup> The Yeopims were one of the branches of the Tuscaroras, or a client nation of that empire, located to the east of the Tuscarora heartland, interspersed with the immigrant settlers in Roanoke. Six months after the Batts Grant, the second known warrant for land was issued, along the Perquimans River, by Kiscutanewh's successor Kilkonen, King of the Yeopims, to a settler named George Durant.<sup>21</sup> This man was to be Batts's successor, not with the title of governor, but as the actual leader whose support from his fellow settlers could topple governors and sundry officials when their policies became unacceptable to the people. These two grants preceded any conferred by the Proprietors, or by Governor Berkeley of Virginia in his anomalous warrants. They are the only Native American grants for which records survive, but are representative of many titles obtained from that authority before the establishment of the colony. The existence of these grants constituted such a problem to the Lords Proprietors that they decreed procedures for their replacement with proprietary grants including financial concessions honoring the settlers' original expense for the purchase of their land.<sup>22</sup>

Considering the foreignness of European notions of private ownership to Native American thought and practice, it is unlikely that those nations issued formal written grants to immigrants at the beginning; it is more likely that there was permission to till land not in use. For the same reason it is likely that some settlers never obtained written grants from their hosts; it was not required; and they were not themselves of a business or legal orientation, especially if all they



envisaged was land use sufficient for a basic livelihood. So irregular were the procedures for land sale and the recording of holdings in seventeenth and even eighteenth century North Carolina<sup>23</sup> that it is not improbable that much land continued to be held under Native American grant, or with no formal title whatsoever. It would appear that the Proprietors, resigned to the isolation and *de facto* independence of North Carolina, were content to receive their feudal dues, the quitrents, without overly concerning themselves with the taxpayers' title to the land, if any.

Why then did Batts, Durant and others desire formal written title from the Native American nations? No answer can be forthcoming, but perhaps both kings and purchasers felt that formal documents would strengthen their positions in the face of Virginia's continuing lust for what she called "the southern plantations," and then the rumor of a Carolina grant in England. Such persons as Batts and Durant may have felt that possession of formal Native American title would give them priority to receive colonial grants. This contingency did not arise in the event, since there was so little demand from outside for acreage in the isolated Roanoke region. The Native American nations may have felt similarly that the issuing of formal written patents strengthened their claim to sovereignty, what with European encroachment seemingly imminent. If so, it was another strategy which proved inoperative, both in theory and practice. The Lords Proprietors would never countenance the proposition that the Emperor of the Tuscaroras and his kings were legal dispensers of the land, rather than Charles II of England. And in practice, North Carolina population grew so slowly that there was no serious threat to Native American independence or land use until the early eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

But why did some settlers, like Batts and Durant, take to themselves large holdings of wilderness? Sensing the coming of colonial rule, they may have wrongly hoped for a boom in land speculation. The two purchasers who we know were clever men, were surely too wise to expect an actual wave of immigration into this harborless marshland. But land speculation does not demand immigration, and one does not have to go back to the seventeenth century to find fortunes won and lost in the sale of swamp covered acreage. Indeed there is evidence that both Batts and Durant, in their dealings with the realm of Christendom, had in them more than a touch of the cony catcher or confidence man, though in Roanoke among their admiring people they appear more as valiant, adventurous leaders of the community.<sup>25</sup> Or the motive may have been utterly different; holding values far from those of the entrepreneurial mind, they may have sought large, unprofitable acres, at nominal cost, for the glory of it—better a

lord of nothing than not a lord at all. For sure, large estates on paper did not mean plantations worked by servants. If there was a patron-client relationship between men of action who held empty title and subsistence farmers who squatted on or near segment of wilderness, it could only have been the relationship between chosen spokesmen, advisors on the wider world, and their constituencies. When they were not engaged in politics, Batts collected furs, with what must have been a frightful overhead for transportation, and Durant shipped out a little tobacco by canoe or shallow-draft sailboat, but their difference from the fugitive squatter was more of community function than of economic status or role in a system for the production of wealth. There was no plantation economy, and commercial activity was meager. It is difficult to see Batts, Durant or other leaders of the Roanoke community as much elevated in wealth or conventional social status over the subsistence farmers, hunters and fishermen of the land. The significant difference between leaders and others of the community was that among those who had removed themselves from plantation society there were some who were more familiar with the English colonial establishment and its ways than most of their fellow settlers.

The significance of immigrant landholding under Native American authority for the history of Roanoke was not legal or economic, but affective. Though settlers who intended to be active in the new colonial government regularized their titles as best they could, all initial grants, formal documents or permission to use, had been arranged with the Native American nations. Whatever the purchasers' motives for formal written titles, they lent dignity if not other strength to the Native American claims to be lords of the land. The nations were not likely to forget that at the time when they could, the old settlers had thrown the weight of their community upon the side of Native American possession. Whatever the legal status of settlers' land thereafter, under proprietary title, still under Native American title, or under no title at all, it is equally likely that the families of old settlers remembered what authority it had been who had first said to them when they came as strangers: "Yes, you may make your living upon this land!" After the granting of asylum, this was a most fundamental basis, corn and game, for continuing outreach between the two racial groups.

The benign relationship between hosts and guests in government and land tenure before 1665 continued under the colony in the form of peaceful relations between settlers and Native Americans. North Carolinians, when they studied the history of their state, have long congratulated themselves on the exceptionally good relations between the two races during the first fifty years of the Colony, the very time when other colonies were wracked by many wars for land and several



major wars of Native American retaliation. The contrast is even more pointed when North Carolina is compared to her immediate neighbors. In Virginia small wars but devastating to the Native Americans accompanied every step of the expanding plantation frontier. In South Carolina, making up for lost time after the successful settlement in 1680, repeated slave wars provided the merchandise for one of the Colony's major branches of commerce; Native Americans, African Americans and Spanish in alliance struck back from Florida; and Protestant Carolinians destroyed the chain of Catholic mission sanctuaries that ran along the southwestern frontier of the Colony.<sup>26</sup>

Most historians of North Carolina have agreed on their impression from the available records that this colony was exceptional in its peaceful relations with the Native Americans. None has attempted to uncover otherwise unknown wars, but two have questioned the consensus. They suggest that the impression of a peaceful North Carolina may have arisen from literature designed to promote immigration, and that settler-Native American relations may have been about the same as elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> It is a fact that records are scanty, but this is true generally for early colonial North Carolina, and to withhold judgment for this reason would render impossible any treatment of the Colony's history. Regarding promotional propaganda, the few such works on North Carolina which seem available do not stress the Native American question, except for one. John Lawson's *A New Voyage to Carolina* was undoubtedly the work most influential in acquainting prospective immigrants with North Carolina, and it does discuss the Native Americans at length, including their relations with the settler population. But this work was much more than a promotional tract; it was designed as a natural history of the Colony, and has been accepted as such ever since. One passage in *A New Voyage* speaks glowingly of peaceful relations, but concludes with an analytic statement to be quoted below which suggests that the author's purpose here was historical, not promotional. The other principal passage on relations between Native Americans and settlers is Lawson's warning, on the eve of the Tuscarora War, that relations had been recently deteriorating.<sup>28</sup> The effect of the book, if carefully read, and its apparent purposes were not promotion of settlement by distortion of description.

The available record includes only one event that can be considered an "Indian War" before the beginning of the Tuscarora War in 1711. This was in 1675, when war by the Native American nations against the colonies raged from New England to Virginia. The southernmost front was an attack upon Roanoke settlers by a small nation who dwelt on the disputed border of Virginia and Carolina. The settlers mobilized, and returned the attack.<sup>29</sup> In joining the more northern belligerents, this

Native American nation separated itself from the Tuscaroras and other nations south of Virginia, or else had never been a part of the interrelated nations to the south. Traditionally the Tuscaroras and their associates had been enemies of the Powhatan Confederacy, the major Native American power in the region of Virginia. In fact there is a legend that the independent Government of Roanoke was militarily involved on the side of the Tuscarora in a war against the Powhatans prior to 1665.<sup>30</sup> It is conceivable that the Roanoke settlers received the support of the nations south of Virginia in the war of 1675. In any event, this was not a war between the settlers and their Native American neighbors of Carolina. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Colonies of Virginia and North Carolina, in their enmity, manipulated the same small group of Native Americans that had attacked Roanoke in 1675, as part of their disagreement over the boundary line of the two colonies,<sup>31</sup> events which were not "Indian Wars" in any significant or usual sense. There is no record, and no hint discovered, of war between the Roanoke settlers and the Tuscaroras or other nations in Carolina between 1665 and 1711.

✓ Hugh Williamson, North Carolina's first historian, rhapsodized on the peace which he believed reigned over his home country in the early years. He speaks of the character of the settlers:

... they had no claims on government; nor did they wish to draw its attention. They regarded the Indian natives as the true lords of the soil; treated with them in that capacity ...

... reason for the long continuance of peace, may be traced from the situation and temper of the first settlers; they were not under the protection of government; they came among the Indians as suppliants who asked favours, not as masters who claimed rights.

Their conduct was as inoffensive as their language. They purchased the soil, paid the stipulated price, and shunned every cause of hostility. The conduct of their successors, for many years, was equally inoffensive.<sup>32</sup>

The historian thought he was speaking of Quakers, but his reasoning applies as well to fugitives of another kind. The most fundamental insight however in the passages above is the concept that the peculiar origin of the settlement may be related to the later history of the colony, also deviant from the European norm. This concept



unfortunately could not be utilized during the last century to cast light upon the mysteries of colonial North Carolina, because of the near unanimous consent to the proposition that there was nothing unusual about the origin of the settlement, that it was one more expression of land hunger, of natural frontier expansion.

It was the great colonial historian Herbert L. Osgood whose sharp logic cut the Gordian knot: Was there war or peace in early North Carolina? His evidence for peace was that the immigrants found compact settlements unnecessary.<sup>33</sup> This reasoning, when noted and pondered, is conclusive. North Carolina, into the early eighteenth century, was distinguished among the colonies for possessing few large plantations, no towns, no villages, no stockaded centers into which the country folk might retreat. North Carolinians liked living apart, which can only mean they felt their lives and limbs secure, though their neighbors were several thousand Native Americans, well-organized, and skillful warriors.

In 1709, when the old Roanoke settler society and political regime and the Tuscarora Nation still existed in North Carolina, the natural historian John Lawson said:

... it is remarkable, that no place on the Continent of America has seated an English Colony so free from bloodshed as Carolina [i.e., North Carolina], but all the others have been more Damaged and Disturbed by the Indians, than they have; which is worthy of notice, when we consider how oddly it was first planted with inhabitants . . . <sup>34</sup>

We cannot know to what "oddness" Lawson was referring in his veiled allusion, whether merely the independence of the pre-colonial settlement, or the kind of persons the first settlers were, and their motives. But like the first North Carolina historian a century later, this student of the Colony, contemporary of the old Roanoke society, saw a significant relation between an unusual origin of the settlement and the unusual development of its relations with the Native Americans.

Besides the patron-client relation in political liberty and land tenure before 1665, and continuing peace for almost fifty years after the establishment of the colony, another positive relationship between Native Americans and settlers was the establishment of personal associations and the exchange of cultures.

There was much to admire in Tuscarora culture for the Roanoke settler community, unencumbered by the usual colonial ambitions. That Empire exhibited both the high material culture characteristic of

the other large Southern "Civilized Tribes," of which it was the northernmost, and the political genius of its kinsmen, the Iroquois Confederation in the North. The wheat fields of the Tuscarora were excellent. Their houses were well constructed of bark covering. The towns were walled, with log palisades. In the center of each town was a circular plaza, "great and beautiful open ground" for festivals and assemblies. Government was by the king in council, "The Assembly of the Great," elders of the nation; in the case of the paramount ruler, these were the kings of the constituent nations. Chief officers of the council were "The Speaker of the Assembly," and a tribune of the people, the youngest member, whose office was to defend those interests not otherwise directly represented. The rules of order were as lofty as those of any European assembly or tribunal, and more adhered to than by many in Europe: an orderly agenda of subjects for discussion, the passing of opportunity to speak from member to member, silence and attention by all others, the right of rebuttal, respect for seniors, gravity, decency and modesty. Thus reported a European nobleman;<sup>35</sup> there is no reason to suppose that Roanoke settlers were less impressed. Judging from the results, the exchange of cultures, Tuscaroras too must have found values as well as techniques worthy of esteem among their guests and neighbors, the children of the British Door and peasantry, and a scattering of the sons and daughters of Africa.

The images of the Native American with his Creole English and rifle, and the immigrant frontiersman dressed in buckskin, are reminders that cultural interchange was generally characteristic of American frontiers. North Carolina's distinction is that the process was not stopped and turned round upon the arrival of official European government. There was no accompanying influx of planter or farmer and commercial immigrants; the first settlers remained dominant socially and politically; there was no drive to establish a purer form of European culture, except among a small, unhappy minority. Not under attack by European power, Native Americans could calmly examine the offerings of European culture without rejecting almost all in patriotic reaction, and without accepting undesired cultural elements as a conquered and degraded people. In similar spirit the Roanoke settler community could continue its exploration of new ways without pressure, inward or outward, to eschew "savagery" and stand up for Anglo-Saxon ways. Since there were Black people in both the Tuscarora and settler communities, African culture doubtless also participated in the process but to a lesser extent, pending the burgeoning of Black involuntary immigration to the colonies. A Creole or Mestizo culture developed in North Carolina, in the sense of a new culture, appropriate for the environment and composed of elements

also 5/5

what is African culture

Katimms, context +



selected from the cultures of origin. The development occurred on both sides of the continuing line of community organization and primary language, Native American and settler, both contributing to the creolization of the region. Some Native Americans, including entire communities, became Europeanized in major respects, without the domination which that usually implies. To the same degree some immigrants became Americanized, perhaps the Roanoke settler community as a whole, since the chief known example of the adoption of Native American way, was the settlers' chosen and beloved Old Governor, and the tales about him they chose to preserve were those which recounted this facet of his life.

The shadow of Nathaniel Batts moves throughout this history of Roanoke and its ethnic relations, as spokesman to the Tuscaroras in his capacity as Governor, first purchaser of land under Native American authority, and, according to stories the settlers told, a Native American by adoption. So pervasive is his presence, and so remarkable the survival of information about him, that one is prompted to see him as a charismatic leader, whose person exercised a powerful hold upon the imaginations of the people who chose him, and through them gripped the attention of outsiders. Considering the loss of most sources for North Carolina history up to 1715,<sup>36</sup> the preservation of so much on the Old Governor is a wonder. His time of activity was the decade before the founding of the official colony and the first decade after its establishment. Yet we know more of this leader of an unrecognized settlement and unconventional society than we do of proprietorial governors and many other leaders of more normal colonial purpose in the North Carolina of later decades. The specific sources for our knowledge of the man also suggest the influence of charisma: the impact he made upon that most spiritually sensitive observer George Fox; the understanding that led a mapmaker to underscore the presence of Captain Batts upon the land; the insight of the Lords Proprietors to permit his people to name him again or another like him to govern their settlement; the people's naming of ancient landmarks in his memory; the transmission of the folk legend of Nathaniel Batts. If the perpetuation of his memory was not the product of the magnetism of his deeds and style, it is hard to see what the cause might be. He lacked all the usual grounds for continuing fame, official status in the eyes of powerful establishments, busy publicists, close associates among the influential, wealth, armies, family connections, designs upon established authority. His only resource for fame was the esteem of his people, and that esteem perceived by the intrigued outsider.

The subject matter of the legend of Nathaniel Batts was his deep immersion in Native American culture; the occasion of the legend's

creation and preservation was his representation of the Roanoke settlers as Governor. But for the settlers to choose him as leader, perceive him as representative, and receive or augment his charisma, it was first necessary for the constituency to view him as one of themselves. Neither an Englishman or a Virginian would do who had not shed his old skin, no matter how charismatic. Batts's Virginia past provided the essential rapport: It had been unpleasant, perhaps sordid; like the other immigrants, he was 'well shet' of the Old Dominion. Though he might continue the fur trade which had originally brought him to Roanoke, Captain Batts's visits to Virginia would be few or none, and his future identification with the gentry of that colony improbable.

His Virginia neighborhood had also been a partial preparation for the terrain of Roanoke. He had lived at Lynnhaven, where necks of swamp and dunes meet in a narrow strip between the Great Dismal Swamp and the desolate Atlantic shore, a neighborhood not as inaccessible as Roanoke, yet remote from Virginia's centers of settlement around Chesapeake Bay. At Lynnhaven he had married a widow, probably deemed rich by the standards of that frontier community. Soon after the nuptials she appeared before the local court and made complaint that her husband was demanding funds from her private estate (or her family's) for the rearing of her children by the previous marriage. A little later she formally entered suit for recovery of her late husband's bequest to her children, which had fallen into the hands of Master Batts. Finally Mrs. Batts's daughter or step-daughter sued her new father for her own bequest. Before he could be seized as embezzler or debtor, he received a year and a day's grace from the high court at Jamestown, in recompense for his explorations to the south.<sup>37</sup> By the time that day arrived, Captain Batts had moved his other home south of Virginia from Roanoke Island to the far western end of Roanoke Sound, a location much less accessible and practically unknown from Virginia. It is unlikely that he ever returned openly to face an enraged family or a debtor's prison. He appears to have been a scoundrel towards his Virginia wife; if so, like many others, the scoundrel in his original home became a beloved hero in the remote land to which he migrated. His flight was from personal problems and debt rather than servitude or poverty, yet he was still a fugitive. Here was basis for rapport, the prerequisite for the development of his charisma in the hearts of his fellow fugitives of Roanoke.

The folklore which the Roanoke community developed around the Old Governor was of two kinds: the naming of landmarks, and the telling of tales. The place names are the most ancient in North Carolina to be given by settlers rather than by the English Proprietors: Bats Creek, Batt's point and Batts Island or Batts Grave, the legendary place



of his burial. The distance between these places, which cover northeastern North Carolina, is indication both of the wide travels of the man upon his business and that of the settlement he led, and the extent of the territory through which he was revered.<sup>38</sup>

Also surviving three hundred years is the legend of Nathaniel Batts, the stories told of him. He is not presented as the Old Governor: so long as the Roanoke community existed, this fact was probably taken as common knowledge; after the cataclysmic destruction of the community, it may have been considered dangerous knowledge to impart when tales were told. In the legend he is rather presented as the first settler of North Carolina, a bold hero and without trace of censure, a devotee of the Native American way of life. Each terse statement may be a summary of an extended narrative, now long lost.

Secotan was the name that Captain Batts received upon his adoption into the Yeopim Nation of the Tuscarora Empire. Regularly he joined his new kinsmen on the hunt and in their homes, adopting Native American dress and customs. He worshipped with the nations in their most holy sacraments, the annual harvest festival, and the medicine dances which implored the aid of the sacred Beings for the nations' security.

During a war against the Powhatan Confederacy to the north in the region of Virginia, he was appointed and served as War Chief of the Tuscarora Empire. In peace Secotan was a member of the Grand Council of the Tuscaroras, where his counsel was welcomed by the Emperor and the thirty kings. In Roanoke he found a wife to love, whose name is given as Kickowanna, daughter of King Kilkano. Before the coming of the official colonial government it was widely believed that Secotan would succeed his father-in-law as king.<sup>39</sup>

This is the legend. Kilkano is undoubtedly that King Kilkono of the Yeopims who succeeded King Kiskutaneh at the end of 1560; it was from these kings that first the Old Governor and then George Durant received their land titles. Otherwise the details of the legend can hardly be relied upon. But its general thrust, Secotan's political and religious intimacy with the kings, is substantiated by Fox's testimony: Captain Batts's counsel in general weighed heavily with the nations; specifically, he was hot to communicate to the kings the coming of a new religion so different from the other European churches, and its prophet, a worker of miracles, like the Tuscarora priests.

The tale of the Old Governor's marriage to the Princess of the Yeopims may point to political possibilities that were cut off by the establishment of the official colony; the later relationship of the next-door neighbors, the Yeopims and settlers, could only be cultural. But the legendary account of the Old Governor's Tuscarora offices in war

and peace, joined to the historic information of his importance to Emperor and kings, decidedly raises the possibility that the Roanoke settlement was moving from the status of a guest community to that of a new but regular constituent nation of the Tuscarora Empire. This would be a development similar to that which occurred a century later between Lower Creeks and African Americans in founding the Seminole Nation of Florida. The membership of the Governor of English-speaking Roanoke in the Grand Council of the Tuscaroras presents an interesting constitutional concept.

The charisma evident in the creating of legends, the naming of places, and the preserving of records, offer Captain Batts as a likely subject for the old school which interprets history as the work of great individual men. Yet he was not a bringer of civilization, a builder of empire, or an imposer of new social order — quite to the contrary. His willingness to be the governor of a country illegitimate in the eyes of Europe, to purchase land from the natives of the continent, to enter into their culture, to become a personage among personages who were not European in ways or color, indicate instead that he was the reflection writ large of the environment, natural and social.<sup>7</sup> He was the embodiment, chosen by his nature and the people, of the region's isolation, the security of the woods and bay below the Great Swamp, the freedom from English law, the Native American presence. In the history of American frontier symbols, the Old Governor was a counter-type to a Nathaniel Bacon, a Daniel Boone or a Davey Crockett. He was not the conqueror, the destroyer of the wilderness, but the genius of the wilderness. It is his mirroring of the settlers who chose him and of their chosen environment that explains his charismatic impact. Thus are his history and legend useful in understanding the community he represented.

The legend of Nathaniel Batts is what folk memory chose to preserve. It is the story of the kind of person normative Anglo-Saxon culture would call "renegade," a person "gone native." Yet the tellers of the tales pictured him as hero, and more, as father of his country. The survival and security of the first settlers, their happiness and power, rested upon Captain Batt's entry in good faith into the oldest ways of Roanoke, and his acceptance by the ancient authorities, even as the community welfare rested also in varying degrees upon similar behavior by the other settlers. The persistence of the legend is measure of the strength of the approval the community gave to the values ascribed to its first governor: openness to the culture of the Native Americans.

There is sufficient direct evidence of the ways of life of Roanoke settlers to show that the legend of Nathaniel Batts did reflect one aspect of this culture. With frequent contact; between settlers and Native



Americans, European elements in the Native American communities, and Native American elements in the immigrant community, it is impossible to speak of the direction of greater initiatives. Indeed there were some neighborhood communities that cannot now be identified as to primary connection, Native American or immigrant, so mixed were their people and culture.

It may be remembered that as early as 1650 there was already an immigrant from Virginia who had absorbed himself into the Native American culture to the extent that he had been made minister of government to one of the kings—a political precursor of Secotan.<sup>40</sup> In the late seventeenth century it was not uncommon for settlers to reside in Native American towns, living as Native Americans. At that late date, long after the establishment of the official colony, children counted as European were raised to adulthood among the Native Americans rather than in the immigrant community. Marriages between settlers and Native Americans were not rare, and this in an organized colony, not, as was common in American history, in a territory beyond the jurisdiction of Anglo-Saxon authority. These marriages were probably encouraged by the lack of immigrant women, which was still a problem a generation after the establishment of the official colony.<sup>41</sup>

A prevalence of European names among the Native Americans, used in addition to their traditional names, suggests the effect of marriage and friendship. There was no pressure or advantage from Anglo-Saxon authority in the adopting of white names, as there would be in other places and times. Some Native Americans who bore English names were probably entirely of European descent, persons adopted or born to membership in the nation; these cannot be distinguished from those of partial or entire Native American ancestry. Perhaps George Durant, the leader of the Roanoke settler community in the late seventeenth century, was married to a Native American princess like his predecessor Governor Batts, for in the early eighteenth century among the five "great men of the Yawpims" (the Yeopim Nation) there were two named Durant, George and John, the latter king of this nation. The Durant dynasty continued for another fifty years, for the last King of the Yeopims in North Carolina, when that nation departed the colony in 1774, was also named John Durant. Great affection for the leader of the Roanoke settler community is thus expressed, if not the more likely explanation of family descent. Other names of the Yeopim elders were John Barber, John Hawkins and Harry Gibbs.<sup>42</sup> The best known kings of the Tuscaroras in the early eighteenth century were King Taylor, King Tom Blount, and the Emperor Hancock, who commanded during the Tuscarora War.

Native  
American  
King

Between settlers and Native Americans there was exchange of material culture, a process universal in American history prior to each stage of "Indian Removal," but with greater significance in the context of an ongoing peace and the development of a Creole culture. The Tuscaroras enjoyed buckwheat cakes, which they called by the presumably English name "dumplings."<sup>43</sup> A Native American industry of the region was the harvesting of *ilex* or *cassenna*, a kind of holly, which grew profusely on the sand banks and islands of Roanoke Sound. The workers cured its leaves, then transported them to the western nations as a Tuscarora contribution to the interior commerce of the continent. From the leaves was brewed Yaupon (*Yeopim*) Tea, a mild stimulant with caffeine base. The Roanoke settler community came to relish the drink, and in later generations North Carolinian travelers were astonished to find their state beverage much enjoyed in South America under the name *Mate* or *Paraguay Tea*.<sup>44</sup>

From the Native Americans the Roanoke settlers received a technology that was indispensable to the very existence of community, both during the independent Government of Roanoke, and in the colonial period: the construction and navigation of *giant canoes*. They were made from single cypress trees, and were large enough to carry a load equivalent to thirty barrels. Split down the middle and a board added, they could carry the equivalent of eighty to a hundred barrels.<sup>45</sup> This "primitive" mode of transportation, like so many techniques referred to by that epithet, was better adapted to the environment than the new techniques of innovative Europe. The canoes, of slight draft, could navigate the shallows of Roanoke Sound and the inlets of the Outer Banks. Thanks to this system of transportation, fishing in Roanoke Sound provided an important supplement to diet, a small commerce in tobacco was possible up to Chesapeake Bay for transshipment, and settlers found recreation in cypress canoes embellished as "curious pleasure boats." But the essential function of the transport system was communication, for barter, social contact, mutual aid, and government, among the scattered people along the rivers and shores of Roanoke Sound.

That the great canoes were navigable in the treacherous outer Atlantic between Roanoke and Virginia is surprising enough. More so is the report of a North Carolina "port" official who was forced to forbid the voyage of a Roanoke father and son, who were determined to transport fifteen barrels of produce by canoe from Roanoke Sound to Barbados.<sup>46</sup>

The Roanoke settlers did not simply adopt techniques that had been developed by the Native Americans, but the two peoples continued to work together. It would appear that Native Americans were more often



the skilled carpenters, as well as the craftsmen of fishing equipment for the Roanoke subsistence fishing industry. There was no exploitative labor relationship, as might be expected from the record of racial contacts at other times and places. Friendliness was the atmosphere of the 'Native American and settler work crews that fashioned the cypress.<sup>47</sup>

Within the Tuscarora towns, adjoining Roanoke to the west and south, there were Native Americans in full ancestry, tribal membership and residence, who spoke English and even wore European clothing.<sup>48</sup> In Roanoke proper, where smaller Native American nations and the immigrant community were interspersed, the distinction between ethnic groups seems to have been little more than whether English or a Native American language was spoken at home. Governor John Archdale wrote from North Carolina to his spiritual advisor George Fox in 1686, "Some of the Indians near me are so civilized as to come into English habits, and have cattle of their own . . ." <sup>49</sup> Twenty years later the natural historian of North Carolina reported that the "Paspitank" (Pasquotank) Nation, in the heart of Roanoke, wore hats, shoes, stockings and breeches, and had developed two industries: the manufacture of "very tolerable linnen Shirts," and the production of butter from herds of dairy cattle.<sup>50</sup> Another Roanoke nation that apparently became creolized were the Yeopims, judging from the frequent mention of their warm relations with the immigrants. That there were two generally recognized ethnic groups among the peoples called "Indian" is confirmed by a newcomer's letter to his father early in the eighteenth century. In his biased rhetoric he said, "As to what y'u desire to know off ye Ind's, some are Civil & some barbarous . . ." <sup>51</sup> It should be noted that such swift and therefore enthusiastic cultural experimentation was the result of informal social intercourse, not the "civilizing" projects of missionaries. There were no missions to the Native Americans here any more than there was a settled ministry among the immigrants.

The multi-racial character of Roanoke's society and culture are affirmed by a generalized statement in a Church of England study of the American colonies in the 1690s. In this document no such characterization is made for the other colonies, and it would have been grossly untrue for the major and developed colonies. Said Anglican Commissary Bray after his field survey:

Roanoke lyes betwixt Virginia and Carolina. It is peopled with English, intermixt with the native Indians to a great extent . . . <sup>52</sup>

After fifty years of development in a favorable environment, a new kind of society had arisen in North Carolina—a people of Native American and European heritage in culture, and sometimes in parentage. In 1714 this society was overthrown, along with its political power, and waves of new settlers transformed North Carolina into a conventional colony. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were still tawny-skinned, English-speaking people of a culture distinct from the new majority, inside the Dismal Swamp as maroons, and outside, as Poor Whites.<sup>53</sup>

The dominance of this society in the early period of the colony had emerged from the independence of Roanoke and the Native American overlordship of government and land, and was nurtured by continuing peaceful relations and cultural interchange between Native Americans and settlers. The history of seventeenth century North Carolina demonstrates that the European component need not be Spanish, Portuguese or French to produce a mestizo country in the Western Hemisphere.

am  
African

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Instructions of the Virginia Company to the Governor (May 1609), quoted in *Ye Countie of Albemarle in Carolina: A Collection of Documents, 1664–1675*, ed. William S. Powell (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1958), p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> William Bullock, *Virginia Impartially Examined, and Left to Public View, to Be Considered by All Iudicious and Honest Men* (London: n.p., 1649), title page quoted in "Carolina in the Seventeenth Century: An Annotated Bibliography of Contemporary Publications," ed. William S. Powell, *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (January 1964): 78.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Bray, Report to the Bishop of London (n.p.: n.d., between 1692 and 1700), quoted in Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858) in vol. 2, pp. 338–339. Thomas Bray, *A Memorial Representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North America* (London, 1700: Thomas Bray Club Reprint, n.p.: n.d.), p. 13. The former appears to have been a manuscript note, preparatory to the printed report. (Hawks was a specialist in Church of



England manuscript records on colonial America.) Bray was Anglican Commissary in America for the Diocese of London, which jurisdiction included the colonies.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Le Jau, *The Carolina Chronicle, 1706-1717*, ed. Frank J. Klingberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), pp. 103, 109, 110, 115, 122, 161, 166, 176.

<sup>5</sup> George Fox, *Journal*, ed. John L. Nickalls, rev. ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), pp. 641-42, 644.

<sup>6</sup> William P. Cumming, "The Earliest Permanent Settlement in Carolina: Nathaniel Batts and the Comberford Map," *American Historical Review* 45 (October 1939): 86-87. William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 22-23.

<sup>7</sup> Lindley S. Butler, "The Early Settlement of Carolina: Virginia's Southern Frontier," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 79 (January 1971): 20, 24n.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25 and n. Among historians who have mentioned Fox's statement without rejecting it, the most positive is Cumming (citations in note 6 above), who concludes there was a pre-colonial government as well as settlement. With his work as a foundation, the present study adds corroborative material, asks how the phenomenon of independent government can be explained, and places it in historical contexts: the other independent pre-colonial governments and settlements, and the motive of the Roanoke immigration.

<sup>9</sup> "Copy of a Commission to Sir William Berkeley to Constitute and Commissionate a Governor for Albemarle River" (1663), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 49. Those studies which have mentioned the proposal for two governments have not discussed its implication.

<sup>10</sup> "A Letter to Sir William Berkeley" (September 8, 1663), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 53-54.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53. "Commission to Berkeley," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 49-50.

<sup>12</sup> Lords Proprietors to the Government of Albemarle (October 21, 1676), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 228.

<sup>13</sup> See below, Chapter 6, note 28, and Chapter 7, note 30.

<sup>14</sup> See note 8, above.

<sup>15</sup> *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. ix-x (William L. Saunders, ed.)

<sup>16</sup> Charles Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934-1938). vol. 3, p. 252.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen B. Weeks, "William Drummond," *The National Magazine* 15 (1891-92): 617-19.

<sup>18</sup> "To the Kings most Excellent Majestie the Humble Peticon of Thomas Miller" (June 29, 1680) in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 304. For confirmation that there was no split between Shaftesbury and the other Proprietors on the strategy of supporting the settlers at the expense of ousted officials, see "Answer of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina Read the 20 Nov. 1680" in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 326.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Defoe, "Party-Tyranny," [1705], in *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708*, ed. Alexander S. Salley, Jr. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> Kiscutanewh, King of Yeopim, Deed to Nathaniell Batts, 1660. Facsimile, North Carolina Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, of photocopy in North Carolina Documents, 1584-1868, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, of original in Norfolk County, Va., Deed Book D, 293.

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh: Daughter of the American Revolution, 1914), pp. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> "Instructions for Sir William Berkeley Governor and Captain General of Virginia in Relation to the Settling and Planting Some Parte of the Province of Carolina: (1663)"; "The Deposition of Richard Watredy" (December 5, 1687); in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 51, 355.

<sup>23</sup> "The Humble Proposals of Tymothy Biggs" (1678), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 247. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 143-44.

<sup>24</sup> "Proposals of Biggs," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 247. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 1, note 38, and note 37, this chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1929).

<sup>27</sup> *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. xxx, vol. 2, p. xiii (William E. Saunders, ed.). Hugh T. Legler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> John Lawson, *History of North Carolina [A New Voyage to Carolina]* (Charlotte, N.C.: n.p., 1903), pp. 141-43. Note that this is a natural, not a social or political history.

<sup>29</sup> "Letter to the Virginia Council" (June 17, 1707), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 658. The letter is from North Carolina, probably from the Council.

<sup>30</sup> See note 39, this chapter.

<sup>31</sup> "Letter to Virginia Council," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 658-59.



<sup>32</sup> Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812), vol. 1, pp. 92 n., 187.

<sup>33</sup> Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1907) vol. 2, p. 232.

<sup>34</sup> Lawson, *North Carolina*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Christoph Von Graffenried, "Manuscript" (n.d.), *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 928, 937, 939, 978-79.

<sup>36</sup> *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. iii-iv (William L. Saunders, ed.). H. G. Jones, *For History's Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History, 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. vii, xiii, xv, xvi. As the title suggests, there is no history of the writing of history in this study. It is ironic but understandable that the state with the worst reputation for the loss of archives is the only one to have produced a study of the attempts at preservation.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Gregory McPherson, ed., "Nathaniell Batts, Landholder on Pascuotank River, 1660," *North Carolina Historical Review* 43 (January 1966): 73-74. Quarter Court Record (James City, Va.: August 17, 1657) in *ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>38</sup> Cumming, "Earliest Permanent Settlement," p. 89 n.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Benbury Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales of North Carolina History* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1901), pp. 19-21. This school text was written from "historical lore," and has been considered by historians to have "historical basis" as well as values for entertainment, political philosophy and humor. Its purpose was to interest young Tarheels in their local history. Samuel A'Court Ashe, "Richard Benbury Creecy," *Biographical History of North Carolina*, 8 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1905), vol. 4, pp. 121-22. Creecy's account as folklore rather than original fiction is shown by parallels between popular veneration of Batts and the published version; *Grandfather's Tales* is treated with respect by recent as well as earlier historians. McPherson, "Nathaniell Batts," pp. 75 n., 76. An indication of the independence of the published legend from the historical sources is the traditional misspelling of Batts's name.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 1, note 10.

<sup>41</sup> R. D. W. Connor, "John Harvey," in Samuel A'Court Ashe, *Biographical History of North Carolina*, 8 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Nappen, 1905), vol. 4, p. 164.

<sup>42</sup> North Carolina Council, Journal (March 28, 1723), in *CRNC*, vol. 2, p. 483.

<sup>43</sup> Graffenried, "Manuscript," p. 927.

<sup>44</sup> Francis Veale, "The Manner of Living of the North Carolinians" (December 19, 1730), ed. and transcribed by Edmund and Dorothy S.

Berkeley, *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (April 1964): p. 244 and n. Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2, pp. 218–19.

<sup>45</sup> Lawson, *North Carolina*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>48</sup> "De Graffenreid's Manuscript," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 929, 942.

<sup>49</sup> John Archdale to George Fox (N.C.: 25th of First Month, 1686), quoted in Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 379.

<sup>50</sup> Lawson, *North Carolina*, p. 112.

<sup>51</sup> "William Gale to His Father" (Perquimans River: August 5, 1703), in *State Records of North Carolina*, ed. Walter Clark, 16 vols. (Goldsboro, Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1895–1905), vol. 22, p. 734. The numbering of the volumes in the *State Records* begins with 11, following the ten volumes of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*.

<sup>52</sup> Bray, Report, in Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, pp. 338–39.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel French to His Wife (1807), in "Some Observations on the Low Parts of North Carolina," ed. Buford Rowland, *North Carolina Historical Review* 15 (April 1938): p. 157.



## Chapter 3

### Quakers With A Small q: Economy And Religion at Roanoke

The Roanoke immigrant community, in its unofficial phase (1650–1665) as well as its colonial (1665–1714), was atypical of the English settlements that became colonies, in respect to its unauthorized beginnings, the probable motives of its settlers, the establishment of an independent government before the colony, and the positive relationship towards the Native Americans. Out of this unique experience grew a distinctive culture. Some of its features have already been mentioned, especially economic pursuits in connection with the questions of immigrant motives, and cultural interchange in the discussion of immigrant-Native American relations. Now distinctive and significant aspects of Roanoke culture will be described with emphasis on the period after 1665, namely its economy and religion, the components most important for the lives of the Roanoke people.

Roanoke consisted of the present North Carolina Counties of Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans and Chowan, with bits of two or three counties to the west. The area was hardly 1600 square miles and probably closer to 1200, between two and three percent of the area of North Carolina today. Roanoke extended about fifty miles west from the Atlantic shore to the inner end of Roanoke or Albemarle Sound, and some thirty to forty miles south from the Virginia border and the Great Dismal Swamp to the shores of the Sound. The area for settlement was even smaller than the measurements indicate, due to the Dismal Swamp, which ran across much of the northern portion of Roanoke.

The land was sparsely settled. The people lived scattered along the lower reaches of the Chowan, Perquimans and Pasquotank Rivers and

lesser streams which flow into Roanoke Sound and served as the colony's transportation routes. Even into the eighteenth century no known persons lived on the necks of land away from the rivers,<sup>1</sup> inaccessible for communication and treacherous with fingers and outliers of the Great Swamp. Population figures are not known, but there were only several thousand settlers towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> A brief and graphic impression of the countryside in 1704 is offered by a visitor:

I was . . . obliged to buy a couple of horses . . . one of which was for a guide; because there is no possibility for a stranger to find his road in that country, for if he once goes astray (it being such a desert country) it is a great hazard if he ever finds his road again.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from Roanoke the vast Colony of North Carolina was virtually empty of immigrant settlement. To the immediate west and southwest of Roanoke was the central territory of the Tuscarora Empire. Farther west lay the rolling hill country in future centuries to be the yeoman farm and industrial heartland of the State, but then scarcely known to newcomers from abroad. Still farther west were the unknown mountains. Along the coast to the south of Roanoke or Albemarle Sound there was a handful of immigrant pioneers, in numbers inconsiderable even by the standards of minute and thinly populated Roanoke. Still farther south on each side of the South Carolina border there was a territory untravelled and unvisited by settlers, which separated Roanoke from the Charleston plantations as if they had been in Europe.

The geographic barriers, in each direction separating North Carolina from her neighbor colonies and from England, gave this colony a unique isolation. As Charles Andrews put it, this was an "isolated settlement, singularly out of touch with the outside world."<sup>4</sup> The isolation was favorable for the development of a distinctive culture, practical independence from the Proprietors, and the continuing of a subsistence economy.

Export and import trade remained insignificant. Small shipments by canoe and shallow-draft sailboat through dangerous waters meant low returns for the settlers' produce and high prices for the goods imported. Cash products provided little more than 'pin money' for the women of Roanoke and powder and shot money for the men.

Tobacco, the principal cash crop at first, was never an important part of the great exports to England from Virginia and Maryland, and by 1700 had declined from even that minor position. Though it increased



as tobacco declined, the export of beef and pork products also remained minor. The trade in furs, North Carolina's other cash product, never became comparable to the vast export of furs to England from the Port of Charleston.<sup>5</sup>

Virginia did not risk competition even from such relatively small enterprise: prohibitive duties were placed upon North Carolina tobacco and furs, and North Carolina made complaint of harassment of its cattle raising industry, the regular carrying away of animals by Virginia planters.<sup>6</sup> Yet despite efforts to find feasible land routes to Virginia, and the establishment of Norfolk, Virginia, as a point for transshipment, the Great Dismal Swamp and the Outer Banks, not Virginia reprisals, remained the insurmountable obstacle to export commerce,<sup>7</sup> and guaranteed the domination of subsistence farming, fishing, and hunting.

Even inside Roanoke there was little commerce, as evidenced by the existence of only one watermill in all North Carolina in the early eighteenth century, for the grinding of grain. A few Roanokers possessed hand mills. Most pounded their grain in hollowed tree stumps, and, lacking sieves, separated the seed from the chaff by shaking in baskets, a process too archaic or too foreign to be familiar to western European visitors.<sup>8</sup>

Since transportation problems forbade any product from becoming a significant export commodity, the list of North Carolina's products is no guide to the increase of wealth. The list is impressive as a guide to the resources for living available to the settlers, and the range of their economic activities. The products were: tobacco, Indian corn, English wheat, beef, pork, hides, tar and pitch, furs of beaver, otter, fox and wildcat, deer skins, tanned leather, tallow and medicinal drugs.<sup>9</sup> To these should be added game and fish. There must also have been processed goods besides the four products that we know were developed by cultural interchange, canoes, linen shirts, dairy produce and Yeopim tea. When we speak then of subsistence farmers in Roanoke we must picture a good subsistence: more than enough wheat to supplement corn bread; a varied high-protein diet of beef, pork, game and fish; the luxuries of butter and a tasty hot stimulant beverage; huts rendered snug and canoes safe with pitch; plentiful tallow by which to see at night; comfortable floor covering and bedding of hides and leather; outer clothing from these and from deer skins and furs; tobacco for the pipe; and a variety of renowned medicines for herb doctors to find in the luxuriant swamps. The settler's work was varied: tilling his field, hunting and fishing, herding, and the crafts by which he processed good raw material.

Though it appears that the Roanoke settler could live well enough, this was the poorest of the colonies in total wealth. With little cash

farming and commerce, there were no internal improvements and no production of a surplus by which wealth could be accumulated; there were too few gentlemen planters or ambitious yeomen and merchants to organize and lead the economy.<sup>10</sup> Yet with the bounty of nature, the smallness of copulation, the friendliness of Native American neighbors, and the absence of plantation labor system, these settlers appear to have enjoyed the highest standard of living of any of the Southern poor for the next two centuries.

There is general agreement among those who reported that the subsistence economy provided a livelihood satisfactory to the settlers. In 1679, while scolding the Proprietors for their lack of financial investment in North Carolina, an official held up to them the accomplishments achieved by the settlers unaided:

... I humbly propose to your Lorps that notwithstanding you have not beene out as yet anything upon that County in ye Province called Albemarle, yet ye Inhabitants have lived and gott Estates under yr Lordps there by their owne Industry and brought it to the capacity of a hopeful Settlement...<sup>11</sup>

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The soil was rich, and enough of it above swamp water for a few thousand subsistence farmers. The climate was balmy, a land that knew little of winter.<sup>12</sup> Wrote Quaker Governor John Archdale to his friend George Fox in 1686: The country is bountiful, requiring as little labor as any I have known.<sup>13</sup> This reformation radical rejoiced at God's blessing upon the laboring poor; in the nineteenth century a clerical historian of the more usual Puritan ethic viewed the same circumstances with disapproval. Without a market for surplus, he wrote, the settlers were lazy. They were favorable to the proverb that "Labor, for labor's sake, is against nature." When he wrote of the Roanoke community this historian looked with relish upon its overthrow by a more commercially minded regime, for "... active trade is a civilizer."<sup>14</sup> But the meeting of their needs and those of their wives and children pleased the settlers, and encouraged them to accommodate themselves to the smallness of the community, the distances between their homes, and the multitude of the Native Americans.<sup>15</sup>

Lacking a market, there was in a sense a glut of good things for living in Roanoke. A little work produced enough; more work produced more than enough. Rather than accumulate an unusable surplus, Roanoke settlers cut back on their hours of work. There are sufficient hints to conclude that one of the values of the Roanoke culture which deviated from the English colonial norm was the use of surplus time for



recreation and communal activity not economically productive. There were the curiously designed pleasure craft dotting the still waters of Roanoke Sound, and the admired tales of the Old Governor's frolics with the Native Americans. Like many traditional societies (in contrast to modern European culture) even labor was turned into communal ritual and play. An irate Anglican missionary found nary a soul present at the place appointed for the rare treat of a service of worship; he discovered later what it was the settlers preferred as recreation: "I heard of a great many met to be merry at a reaping of wheat."<sup>16</sup> Around 1700 Roanoke became famous for the excitement, spectacle and sport of its horse races. The settlers thronging for these events were joined by usually respectable Virginians who made the arduous journey around the Dismal Swamp for a few days of sporting relaxation.<sup>17</sup> America's long history of 'wide-open' jurisdictions and tired businessmen on a spree had begun.

Before 1714 not only North Carolina's economic, but also her religious culture were divergent from the other colonies. The first Quaker missionaries to Roanoke found only two members of their society. But inspired by the visit of George Fox, converts were made, meetings (congregations) were organized in the 1680s, and within a decade Quakers felt called to political action and were selected by the majority of settlers as their spokesmen. After the overthrow of the old Roanoke regime the Quakers withdrew from political action, and in the early nineteenth century, unhappy in a slavery society, migrated from North Carolina to the Midwest.<sup>18</sup>

The Quakers were never more than a small fraction of the people of North Carolina. Yet they constituted the only organized church in Roanoke. Most settlers were members of no church. The Church of England, though in a legally favored position, consisted of several ill-kept buildings and a series of frustrated missionaries without congregations. Nor did settlers choose to organize Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist or other dissenter churches. The assumption sometimes made, that there was an organized dissenter presence besides the Quakers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries arises from the existence of wandering preachers without congregations, and unchurched persons who referred to themselves as Presbyterians or by the name of some other English church.<sup>19</sup>

The best and oft-quoted report was made in 1704 by a Church of England missionary:

For the country may be divided into four sorts of people: first, the Quakers, who are the most powerful enemies to Church government [Church of England], but a people

very ignorant of what they profess. The second sort are a great many who have no religion, but would be Quakers, if by that they were not obliged to lead a more moral life than they are willing to comply to. A third sort are something like Presbyterians, which sort is upheld by some idle fellows who have left their lawful employment, and preach and baptize through the country, without any manner of orders from any sect or pretended Church. A fourth sort, who are really zealous for the interest of the Church [of England], are the fewest in number, but the better sort of people . . .<sup>20</sup>

That the greater number of North Carolinians were members of no church is confirmed by another Anglican missionary four years later. His categories are different from his colleague's, an indication that the estimates were made independently. He is alone among the Anglican missionaries to estimate a high membership for his own church. It is likely that the earlier missionaries had been counting the devout few who took communion, whereas he is contemplating political Anglicans, at a time of mounting attacks upon the old Roanoke regime.

. . . in general there are three sorts of people among us: many religious and true members of our communion, some Quakers, and most bred up in ignorance, who neither know nor profess any religion at all . . .<sup>21</sup>

The absence of churches and church members, except Quaker, is also confirmed by a private family communications, unrelated to Anglican missionary effort, made in 1703:

Roanoake is ye place off my pres't settlem't, off w'ch as to ye state of Religion I wish I cood give a more laudible charact'r. The Quakers are here very numerous, butt as for Independant [Congregationalist] Anabaptists [Baptists], Presbeterians & other sectarys, they have little or noe place here . . .<sup>22</sup>

Though most members of the Roanoke community refrained from joining or organizing churches, they did have a religion, a religious position or attitude. They were quakers, Quakers with a small q. As quoted above, they "would be Quakers" except for the Puritan strictness of that Society. The first well-known Englishman to brave the dangers of a visit to isolated Roanoke, and with a friendly purpose, was George



Fox. He held Quaker 'silent' meetings, unstructured worship in which all sat in silence until one was moved to speak by the Inner Light, the Holy Ghost. The people of Roanoke were much impressed by Fox and his fellow Quaker missionaries. That the distinctive Quaker doctrine and practice, the presence of God in all persons, and His speaking with their tongues, were condemned and violently persecuted by the other churches did not diminish the settlers' appreciation of this new wonder. Knowledge of the Quaker persecution may have augmented the approval expressed by the unchurched seceders from Virginia and Christendom.

It was Governor Batts himself who first spread the word "up and down among the people in the country," as George Fox reported. Moreover Fox and Batts agreed to work together in the transmission of the Quaker message to the kings of the Tuscaroras. What intrigued Captain Batts the most, after he had witnessed a Quaker meeting and met George Fox, was a tale he had heard of old, that Fox was empowered to bestow the gift of healing upon others. Fox neither affirmed nor denied the story to Batts.<sup>23</sup> From Batts's enthusiasm we may suppose that he included this miracle tale in his popularizing of the Quaker faith among the Roanoke settlers and the Native Americans. In connection with this interest of the Governor in a living supernatural for his own time, it should be recalled that according to the legend of Batts, the Governor had been a devotee of Native American ritual for some seven to fifteen years before the coming of Fox to Roanoke.

Settlers of British origin came from social strata, peasantry and poor, in which the belief in magic and its practitioners abounded. There were also Native Americans present at the first Quaker meetings in Roanoke, and before the end of the century Black Quakers were laboring among the unconvinced element of the African Americans.<sup>24</sup> These two cultures also counted the magician as an established part of their social structure. Did then Governor Batts and those others impressed by the Quaker movement, white, Native American and African American, perceive George Fox, in part, as a great benign sorcerer? Though the Society of Friends has decried miracles in recent centuries and set aside its early heritage of wonder-working, in the seventeenth century miracles were attributed to Quaker charismatics, and especially to George Fox. His silence in the face of the Governor's inquiry on the power of healing marks a step in the transition away from the Quaker witness of miracles. But Quakers could hardly control the ideas about them held by undisciplined admirers in backwoods Carolina.

It would seem reasonable that British peasant folklore, invigorated by the active presence of Native American religion and magic and then by the wonders of African mysticism, would have produced an unusually rich mix of occult beliefs and practices. Unfortunately there

is no information on the degree of folk mysticism in seventeenth century North Carolina, except the indications concerning Governor Batts. One historian who hinted at the prevalence of sorcery probably misevaluated the wording of the commission for Justices of the Peace in 1679 Albemarle: to inquire "of all and all manner of felonies, witchcrafts, enchantments, sorceries, magic arts, trespasses, forestallings, regratings and extortions whatsoever."<sup>25</sup> The listing of exotic supernatural crimes first may be no reflection of a special problem in Roanoke, but only a standard wording from England, placing violations of canon law before those of the civil.

The only contemporary information that is suggestive of the probable significant presence of such folk beliefs in Roanoke is reported by the twentieth century Quaker historian Rufus Jones. He points out that when Quakerism first arose in Virginia in the 1650s, the same circle of acquaintances and neighbors who had been involved in accusations of witchcraft became the pioneer converts, a few years later, to the Quaker persuasion.<sup>26</sup> The common denominator is a search for wonder, for immediate supernatural experience not to be found in the routinized churches, Anglican or conventional dissenter. It may well be that the same dynamic operated in Roanoke among the major settler group who were fascinated by Quakerism but never submitted to its authority. Prior folkloric convictions provided the readiness to admire the Friends, and then, merging with the Quaker witness, transformed English Quakerism into Roanoke quakerism. The lack of formal prayers and all other church rituals at Quaker meetings, the sitting in silence, and the outrush of inspired words may have seemed to the Roanoke quakers less a churchly service of worship than a gathering of adepts for the performance of latter-day miracles.

A major cause of admiration for the Quakers by the unchurched majority is likely to have been a non-spiritual attitude, that of anti-clericalism. As the social historian of North Carolina stated unsympathetically, the ungodly may have supported the Quakers because they wanted no religion at all.<sup>27</sup> If one substitutes the word church for religion in the last sentence, there are grounds for his assertion. In respect to religious forms the Quaker meeting was the minimal church; and the militant Quaker rejection of "steeple houses" and "hireling ministry" would have been sweet music to the ears of Roanoke settlers who had heatedly rejected the ecclesiastical as well as social-economic dimensions of the Virginia and English order. An intemperate Church of England missionary reported that the majority of the Roanoke people were libertines,<sup>28</sup> a word which then held connotations of atheism as well as sexual profligacy. A more sober and reliable Anglican missionary reported that the Quakers stirred up the



ignorant and irreligious majority to express militant ribald skepticism towards Christian doctrine and the dignity of the Church, blasphemy towards the Holy Sacraments, and ridicule for the most sacred aspects of religion.<sup>29</sup> As is not unusual, he felt the need to postulate instigators of disapproved mass attitudes. But since the Roanoke Quakers were merely settlers who had become convinced, the relationship was likely to have been more the admiring cooperation of rough, violent-minded anticlericals with the smaller organized group of dedicated and thoughtful radical Christians, rather than the alleged relation of seduced settlers and seducing Quakers.

It would be unwise to view the anticlericalism of the Roanoke majority as philosophic rationalism, in spirit at all akin to the intellectual Deism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or its successors, nineteenth century Freethought and twentieth century Naturalistic Humanism. These movements of the Enlightenment and the rise of the natural sciences were strenuously opposed to all concepts of the supernatural, whether orthodox Christian or of the ethnic religions. They would substitute reason or scientific method, in all of humanity's concerns. If their well educated, well-to-do or middle class spokesmen had deigned to consider folk beliefs, they would have swept them away as strenuously as the dogmas of Christianity. But the subsistence farmers of Roanoke were largely illiterate, isolated from the worlds of European thought, and generally descended from the poorest elements of England. Their contempt for church and orthodox doctrines would have had social, not intellectual origins. Their experiences in Virginia, or those reported by their parents, may have led them to the same conclusion as a recent scholar: The parish church in Virginia, utilizing compulsory attendance, exercised a "spirit of control," promoting conformity to the social norms of the planter vestries and obedience of the poor towards their 'betters.'<sup>30</sup> While rejecting the Virginia plan for secular order the Roanoke community also rejected its spiritual instrument of control. Thus the settlers, unlike philosophic freethinkers, could at the same time attack institutionalized religion and yet be deeply imbued with folklore, believers in the supernatural, searchers for the excitement or refreshment of mystical experience.

The same observers who reported the majority's opposition to churches and doctrines also noted their indulgence in spiritual experiences of high emotion. One of the missionaries feared that rather than converting any to the Church of England he would scarcely be able to prevent the few who called themselves Anglican "from being perverted and seduced in this place of so great ignorance and enthusiasm."<sup>31</sup> There is special meaning in his characterization of Roanoke as a place of enthusiasm. The word had not yet taken on its

present meaning of strong commitment; in the seventeenth century enthusiasm was a technical ecclesiastical term which meant uncontrollable religious emotion, dangerous to the good order of Anglican or Puritan churches. The Quakers themselves were dismayed at the crying out and bodily contortions of visitors to their silent meetings in Roanoke, which aroused wonder and distress in more sober potential converts: "But the Noises and Elevations of some professing Truth, occasioned their Admiration" (the astonishment of other visitors), "and was hurtful to them . . ." <sup>32</sup> Confirming the prevalence of unorganized religious enthusiasm is the report of "idle" fellows who had left their other employment and preached through the country without the sponsorship of any "pretended" church or sect. Since these did not organize congregations and establish church discipline, their only function was to preach, that is, to gather "revival meetings," *ad hoc* assemblages of settlers who desired a religious experience which did not commit them to any church. This phenomenon was much like the camp meetings of the early nineteenth century frontier or the nondenominational revivals of today, with the difference that there were no churches to which the spiritually aroused might repair for Christian nurture. The catalytic effect of the Society of Friends upon the self-isolated Roanoke community appears to have produced a kind of group religious experience similar to that of the Pentecostal churches today, the expression of the Holy Ghost not through silent waiting and solemn testimonies of witness, but by "Noises and Elevations." Precise labeling of this American variety of religion was not to be until the Pentecostal Churches, of obscure origin, came to the notice of ecclesiastical and other sociologists in the Poor White and Black villages of the South late in the nineteenth century, and their neighborhoods in the Northern cities early in the twentieth century.

The Roanoke community, during its sixty-five years of history developed a religion of its own, a religion without a name, here called quaker. To sum up, the quaker religion was characterized by admiration for the Quaker doctrine and practice of the Inner Light and the Quaker code of ethics, the selection of Quakers as political spokesmen, an inability to become members of the Society of Friends because of the quaker ethic of pleasure rather than work and discipline, a militant contempt for all other churches and orthodox doctrines, and a need for highly emotional religious experiences. There may also have been a holding on to folk beliefs in magic and spirits, a blurring of the distinction between magic and religion, the perception of the Society of Friends as an occult form of Christianity and of George Fox as a Grand Benign Sorcerer as well as a radical anti-clerical Christian prophet. <sup>33</sup>



What of the religion of the Roanoke settlers before the coming of Fox and the beginning of the Quaker mission in 1672? From the reconstruction in the preceding paragraph of the Quaker position evolved from the contact of Quakers and settlers, it can be seen that the prior form should have included the opposition to churches and the need for enthusiastic religious experience. But also, even though there was as yet no Quaker presence (except a married couple who did not witness), there seems already to have been an opposition to the taking of oaths, one of the best known of the Quaker moral principles. The evidence for this anomaly is an instruction to the Governor and Council of Albemarle by the Lords Proprietors in 1670: "... in case any man for Religion sake be not free to sweare then shall he subscribe the same in a Book for that case provided which shall be deemed the same with swearing."<sup>34</sup> Wesley Craven has seen the parallel provision in *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* of the same year as an invitation to West Indian Quakers to remove to the new colony.<sup>35</sup> A consideration for immigrants is the only possible explanation for South Carolina and the regions of North Carolina south of Albemarle for there were no settlers Quaker or otherwise. But the Albemarle instructions were to an existing colonial government and settlement, and need therefore to be read in conjunction with the Proprietors' enlightened indulgence for the "liberty of Conscience" of the Roanoke community, expressed in 1663 in the proposal for two governors. It should be remembered that the Proprietors' suggestion was to send new settlers to the south of Albemarle Sound, leaving the Roanoke folk free to express their peculiarities. The most reasonable explanation then for the 1670 instruction to Albemarle is that permission to eschew oaths was a part of the Proprietors' general indulgence of the tender conscience of the Roanoke community. Settlers already included an opposition to oath-taking as part of their distinctive system of values, though they were not Quakers, nor in touch with Quakers.

But what kind of persons dwelling in the wilderness far from the Society of Friends would hold to this principle? The origin of the prohibition of oaths, along with pacifism and other extreme ethical practices, is the new law set down in the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament. Catholic, Anglican and major Puritan churches never considered these commandments to be operative, but they were so considered by numerous small sects of the Middle Ages, usually outlawed and underground, by seemingly similar Radical Reformation sects on the European continent in the sixteenth century, and by radical Reformation sects which proliferated in England during the Civil War in the 1640s and 1650s. George Fox began his witness in the 1640s, but the Quaker movement does not emerge from obscurity until the

1650s, and held on after 1660, when the numerous other sects had been crushed or dispersed in the face of reaction. It is generally accepted by historians that the Society of Friends gathered up some of the remnant of the defeated and scattered sects; it is also generally accepted, though historians have reached no agreement on the class composition of the sects, that many of the poor and middling, urban and rural, joined the other sects and the Society of Friends. Roanoke settlers who came of confirmed vagabond and underworld heritage would not likely have been of this sectarian milieu. But those Roanokers who had come from a background essentially peasant or apprentice craftsman would have had some familiarity with the radical religious ferment which had swept England at the time they or their parents came to Virginia as indentured servants. Perhaps the experience of servitude and flight had intensified the memory of radical sectarian protest. At any rate, the old no-oath ethic, with its latent potential anti-church and anti-state implications, was present in Roanoke during the 1660s in sufficient strength to come to the attention of the Lords Proprietors as one specific component of the peculiar community's general craving for liberty of conscience. The source of this distaste for oaths in early Roanoke, if not Quaker, must have been those radical attitudes that were 'in the air' of mid-seventeenth century England before the establishment of the Society of Friends, and that continued outside as well as inside the Society. In Roanoke this early settler opposition to oaths, like the early settler anti-clericalism, was a predisposing cause of the alacrity with which some settlers became Quakers, and with which most settlers came to admire the Friends and to choose them as their political leaders.

One more probable characteristic of Roanoke religious attitudes before the contact with Fox can be mentioned, besides the opposition to oaths, anti-clericalism and religious enthusiasm. As has already been discussed in connection with the tales about Nathaniel Batts, surviving Roanoke legendry expresses approval of the adoption of the customs of the Native Americans, specifically, participation in their religious rituals. This is not surprising in the special context of the Roanoke environment. Accustomed to a belief in magical or magic-like wonders, seceders from Christendom, eschewers of churches yet yearning for emotional religion, uncontrolled by established political and ecclesiastical authority, it would be strange if Roanoke settlers had not reacted as more than observers to the rich and impressive ceremonial and spiritual promises of their Native American friends.

The Roanoke community's positive attitude towards participation in Native American ritual raises a question about a hitherto unexamined portion of *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*. The intent of these articles of the document was to place the power of the



Proprietorial colonial government behind the encouragement of the organization of *Native American and African religious bodies*, and to guarantee these *non-Christian congregations the same rights as Christian churches*. Were those astounding provisions a response by the Lords Proprietors to reports on the culture of the Roanoke community, in accord with the Proprietors' policy of securing the loyalty of the present inhabitants of their colony?

As every school child used to know, *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* are supposed to have been composed by the great liberal philosopher John Locke, as a written constitution for the Colony of Carolina, both South and North. There is actually some doubt as to the relative contribution of Locke and the Proprietors themselves; the latter enacted the document in 1669 and promulgated it in the Colony the next year. It is a long, baroque prospectus, with nods at representative government and plantation slavery, but is primarily the construction on paper of an ideal feudal state, with the Proprietors at the apex, and a hierarchy of nobles with new fanciful titles in descending order. A few provisions were half-heartedly and partially put into effect; many were never executed. *The Fundamental Constitutions* had little effect upon the actual organization and political history, especially of North Carolina. The significance of the document lies in its express on of the thoughts of John Locke and the Proprietors of Carolina.

As incredible as its feudal dream and more significant to the study of political philosophy are its provisions concerning religious toleration. Their radical departure from the main course of the development of freedom of conscience has been little noted. Many historians have stated that there was little new or different in its provisions for toleration, merely the mutual forbearing among churches so current in the late seventeenth century in reaction to the wars of religion; some have focussed on the document's recognition of the Church of England without mentioning its encouragement of the proliferation of manifold organized religions. Several historians have observed and briefly stated the strange and deviant recognition of the non-Christian faiths.<sup>36</sup> This uniquely broad acceptance of the world religions deserves more attention, particularly in light of the fact that the only English-speaking settlement at the time of the enactment was the ethnically and religiously mixed Roanoke community.

Here are the pertinent provision in *The Fundamental Constitutions* (italics supplied):<sup>37</sup>

No man shall be permitted to be a freeman of Carolina, or to have any estate or habitation within it, that doth not

acknowledge a God, and that God is publicly and solemnly to be worshipped.

But since *the natives of that place*, who will be concerned in our plantation, are utterly strangers to Christianity, whose idolatry, ignorance or mistake, gives us *no right to expell or use them ill*; and those who remove from other parts to plant there, will unavoidably be of different opinions concerning matters of religion, the liberty whereof they will expect to have allowed them, and it will not be reasonable for us on this account to keep them out; *that civil peace may be obtained amidst diversity of opinions*, and our agreement and compact with *all men*, may be duly and faithfully observed, the violation whereof, upon what pretence soever, cannot be without great offence to Almighty God, and great scandal to the true religion which we profess; and *also that Jews, Heathens and other dissenters* from the purity of the Christian religion, *may not be scared and kept at a distance* from it, but by having an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth and reasonableness of its doctrines, and the *peaceableness and inoffensiveness* of its professors, may be by good usage and persuasion, and all those convincing methods of gentleness and meekness, suitable to the rules and design of the gospel, be won over to embrace, and unfeignedly receive the truth; therefore *any seven or more persons agreeing in any religion, shall constitute a church or profession*, to which they shall give some name, to distinguish it from others.

No man shall use any reproachful, reviling, or abusive language against any religion of any church or profession . . .

Since charity obliges us to wish well to the souls of all men, and religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right, *it shall be lawful for slaves as well as others, to enter themselves and be of what church or profession any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freeman*. . . .



No person whatsoever shall disturb, molest, or persecute another, for his speculative opinions in religion, or his way of worship. . . .

What have we here! *All* religions, not merely the Protestant denominations, are tolerated, granted equal rights, and encouraged to organize into congregations, so long as each acknowledge a God, and the need for public worship, whatever the form of ritual. Specifically included in the guarantees are Jews and other adherents of the non-Christian faiths, the "Heathen." The religious liberty of Native Americans to pursue their traditional faith is expressly singled out. Africans, though in slavery, are invited to organize the churches or persuasions of their choice with the same freedom. Throughout the articles the phrase "church or profession," meaning profession of faith, is used, a sensitive recognition that non-Christians do not call their congregations churches. The emphasis upon the equality under law of Native American and African religions along with the Christian demonstrates that the document is not intended to be theoretical, concerned with far-off Hindus and Buddhists who are not likely to come to Carolina, but is practical, directed to these ethnic groups who already reside in the colony. The practical intent is also shown in detailed articles, not here quoted, which provide instructions for self-incorporation and registration of the "churches or professions."

The singularity of this document in the modern history of ideas, much less of laws, practically defies explanation. From the time of the Crusades English law had maintained nothing but perpetual enmity between Christians and infidels. At the time of *The Fundamental Constitutions*, Virginia and other colonies were directing this unrelenting principle against the Native Americans.<sup>38</sup> The general progress of religious toleration in the late seventeenth century to which the Carolina document has often been assigned went only so far as the practice of toleration among Protestants, and proposals, not carried out, to include Catholics and Jews. Mention of toleration, even in theory, for Muslims or Hindus, much less for followers of the "primitive" religions, was so rare as to be virtually invisible. In the United States, one of the first countries of European culture to establish religious freedom in law, the practice has not matched the principle: Unofficially but with great social impact this was first a Protestant nation, then a Christian nation, and today a Judeo-Christian nation. Twentieth century ecumenicity encourages the appreciation of the Great World Religions in surveys of "Comparative Religion," but the Native American vision of man in nature and the African veneration of the Holy Spirits of help are relegated to a prefatory note revealingly entitled "Primitive

Religion." It is the sweep of toleration in *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* that causes it to stand alone thus far in the history of western ideas and law: Across the spectrum of Protestant sects to the most radical, across the Catholic and Jewish households of faith, across the great religious communities of Asia, and on to the sacred beliefs and practices of Native Americans and Africans, extending religious freedom, equal rights and equal dignity to the religions of the two most despised victims of European expansion.

Why did Locke and the Proprietors compose this proposal, and the latter enact it into law? He and some of them were deistical, but this rationalism rendered little respect and less attention to the "idolatry," the "superstition" of Native American and African religion.

Wesley Craven remarks that a broad grant of religious freedom was a shrewd strategy to encourage the immigration of productive settlers, Jews, Quakers and conventional Puritans.<sup>39</sup> He is surely right that this was a motive for the toleration articles of *The Fundamental Constitutions* in respect to the hoped-for settlements south of Roanoke. It can be shown that the purpose was successful in South Carolina. But religious toleration for Native Americans and Africans can hardly be related to the encouragement of immigration.

It can however be related to another and similar shrewd business strategy of the Lords Proprietors: to win the loyalty of the community that had settled before the Carolina grant. Failing deist and immigration motives, it is reasonable to look to Roanoke to explain the explicit protection of Native American and African consciences. It was the only settlement in Carolina; there is unquestionable evidence elsewhere of the Proprietors' strategic concern for the consciences of the settlers; there is good reason to believe that there was religious as well as other cultural exchange between the settlers and the Native Americans; and by 1665 or earlier the Proprietors had some source of information on the strange community they had inherited. There is nothing inherently improbable in the speculation that the Proprietors' source, as it had informed them of the generally tender consciences at Roanoke, and specifically of the objection to oaths, also reported that the Old Governor and his people had been exchanging religious attitudes with the Native Americans, and that 'twould be best for the comfort of Roanoke settlers to mention Native American religion in the proposed broad guarantee of toleration. The further explicit mention of the religion of Africans would then be either an afterthought, since "primitive" religion was to be recognized, or else a reflection of the small group of Africans and African Americans who had been living at Roanoke since the early 1650s.



Another deviation from the Anglo-Saxon norms for both religion and family relations was the most extraordinary marriage law in American colonial history, enacted by the Assembly of North Carolina in 1670, one of the few laws of the Roanoke regime that has survived.

Forasmuch as there may be divers people that are minded to be joyned together in the holy state of Wedlock and for that there is noe minister as yet in this County by whom the said Partyes may be joyned in Wedlock according to the rites and customs of our native Country the Kingdome of England that none may be hindred from this soe necessary a worke for the preservation of Mankind and settlement of this County it is enacted . . . that any two persons desiring to be joyned together in the holy state of matrimony takeing three or fower of their Neighbours along with them and repairing to the Governor or any one of the Councell before him declaring that they doe joyne together in the holy state of Wedlock. And doe accept one the other for man and wife . . . It shall be deemed a Lawfull Marriage and the partyes violating this Marriage shall be punishable as if they had binn married by a minister according to the rites and Customs of England.<sup>40</sup>

And that was it, except for the filing of a marriage certificate. The law stood until the end of early settler rule in the eighteenth century. From the statement that "there may be divers people that are minded to be joyned" we may surmise that this colonial law was the reenactment of a sometime procedure under the independent government of Roanoke whereby couples desiring regularization of their relation went before Governor Batts or his representative.

This was no marriage under the law of England or the general European legal custom, which required the participation of the church. Since the Roanoke law required a public act and certification, this was not the "Common law marriage" of Scotland and later the United States, which placed unmarried couples under the obligations of marriage after the passage of years in which they passed as married, without ceremony or certificate. The church would have advised a community without ministers, cut off from the world: Abstain, or if you sin, as you will, rectify it by marriage as soon as you open communication with the outside. A community that was in touch with the outside world would have been told by the law, civil or ecclesiastical: Get yourself ministers, then marry. To appreciate the Roanoke law fully, it is necessary to observe that the absence of

ministers pleaded as the reason for the law arose from the wish of the settlers—they wanted no churches. This was a radical secular form of marriage, marriage under state auspices without church participation, which would not appear again until the nineteenth century in Europe, influenced by the principles of the French Revolution.

No wonder the early historians of North Carolina considered this law a scandal. So dismayed were they by this and a companion law excusing fugitives from debt that they snarled: One may judge from such a law the state of this people's temper, opinions, religion and morals.<sup>41</sup>

The historians of the past century however have exonerated colonial North Carolina—in a number of ways. One of them, eight years before the text was published in the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, expressed his doubt that there had ever been such a law. The editor of the *Colonial Records* defends the honor of his state by the riposte that it was marriage, not divorce, which the law made easy. Others have explained that it was Virginia hostility which publicized the law and gave North Carolina a bad name.<sup>42</sup> This is true, but it does not wipe off the book this further piece of evidence of the distinctiveness of Roanoke culture.

The almost total secularization of nineteenth and twentieth society has obscured the hold which the church, or religion, once exercised over human emotions and public opinion. In the thought of the seventeenth century and the stated values of the eighteenth, the idea of secular marriage was intolerable, lewd because it was blasphemous. The attitude was still familiar to early nineteenth century historians, and provided the basis for their outraged judgment on this law's deviance from the norm.

The law is of interest for the Quaker role in the formation of Roanoke culture. It did not establish the Quaker wedding, which meets before no magistrate. Yet it was similar to the Quaker mode, inasmuch as the espoused married one another, performed the ceremony, with no officiant. Thus in respect to marriage customs as in other respects, the Roanoke settlers show themselves not to have been Quakers, but to have had some affinities with Quaker ways which help to explain their admiration for the Quakers and the close political alliance of quakers and Quakers.

The North Carolina marriage law continued in force into the early eighteenth century. What is more, though the law does not forbid a stray minister from marrying a couple, it came to be so interpreted in the popular mind. So says one of the more reliable Anglican missionaries. Ruefully and sarcastically he reported to his bishop in London in 1704:



I married none in the country, for that was a perquisite belonging to the magistrates, which I was not desirous to deprive them of.<sup>43</sup>

A strange country, Albemarle, where folk preferred leisure to wealth, spiritual marvels abounded without churches, and where a minister must forever ride past the merry sounds of the wedding celebration and never stand in their midst as celebrant.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Blair, "Mr. Blair's Mission to North Carolina" (1704), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 602.

<sup>2</sup> William S. Powell, ed., *Ye Countie of Albemarle in Carolina: A Collection of Documents, 1664-1675* (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1958), p. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> Blair, "Mission," p. 600.

<sup>4</sup> *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934-1938), vol. 3, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, 4 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1968-74), vol. 3, *North Carolina Higher Court Records, 1697-1701* (sub-series vol. 2), pp. xv-xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Pierce Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Va.: Mariners' Museum, 1953) p. 115. Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), vol. 2, p. 428. Edward Hyde, "Part of a Letter from Coll: Hyde Dated North Carolina January the 21st 1710/11," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 751. Leonidas Dodson, *Alexander Spotswood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), p. 17. Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, pp. 172, 201.

<sup>8</sup> Christoph Von Graffenried, "Manuscript" (n.d.), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 913.

- <sup>9</sup> Robert Holden, "To the Lords of Trade" (May 21, 1707), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 663.
- <sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1, notes 23 and 24.
- <sup>11</sup> "The Humble Proposals of Tymothy Biggs" (1678) in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 247.
- <sup>12</sup> Johh Lawson, *History of North Carolina [A New Voyage to Carolina]* (Charlotte, N.C.: n.p., 1903), p. 35.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 379.
- <sup>14</sup> Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, pp. 590-91.
- <sup>15</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 248. Lawson, *North Carolina*, p. 35.
- <sup>16</sup> John Urmston, "Mr. Urmston's Letter" (July 7, 1711), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 766.
- <sup>17</sup> John Brickell, *The Natural History of North Carolina* (Dublin: n.p., 1737), p. 39.
- <sup>18</sup> Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, N.C.: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914), p. 118.
- <sup>19</sup> Blair, "Mission," p. 602. James Adams, "Mr. Adams to the Secretary" (September 18, 1708), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 687. William Gale, "To His Father" (August 5, 1703), in *State Records of North Carolina*, ed. Walter Clark, 16 vols. (Goldsboro, Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1895-1905), vol. 22, p. 733.
- <sup>20</sup> Blair, "Mission," pp. 601-02.
- <sup>21</sup> Adams, "To the Secretary" (1708), p. 686.
- <sup>22</sup> Gale, "To His Father," p. 733.
- <sup>23</sup> George Fox, *Journal*, ed. John L. Nickalls, rev. ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), pp. 641-642.
- <sup>24</sup> Thomas Story, *Journal of the Life . . .* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: n.p., 1747), pp. 157-58. Fox, *Journal*, p. 644.
- <sup>25</sup> Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 341.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 275.
- <sup>27</sup> Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 341.
- <sup>28</sup> Urmston, "Letter" (1711), p. 767.
- <sup>29</sup> John Adams, "Mr. Adams to the Secretary" (October 4, 1709), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 720.
- <sup>30</sup> William H. Seiler, "The Anglican Parish in Virginia," in *Seventeenth Century America*, ed. James Morton Smith (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 122, 128, 141-42.



<sup>31</sup> Adams, "To the Secretary" (1708), p. 687.

<sup>32</sup> Story, *Journal*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> Blair, "Mission," p. 602.

<sup>34</sup> "Instructions to the Governor and Councill of Albemarle" (1607), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>35</sup> *The Colonies in Transition, 1660-1713* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 102.

<sup>36</sup> John Spencer Bassett picks out the religious articles as the most strikingly liberal. *The Constitutional Beginnings of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 12, no. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1894), pp. 40-41. Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell point to the crux of the matter: religious toleration for Indian, heathen and Jew. *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 192. On the other hand Stephen Beauregard Weeks can only see, with dismay, the Anglican Church establishment (which actually was treated as permissive, not mandatory, at least in North Carolina). *The Religious Development in the Province of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 10, nos. 5-6 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1892), pp. 15-19. Connor and, alas, Andrews read the provisions as if they were for mutual accomodation of Christian denominations only. R. D. W. Connor, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), vol. 1, p. 84. Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, pp. 216-17. Mention without comment of the provisions for non-Christians, a complaint that atheists were not protected, and concerns similar to those of Weeks are found in Haskell Monroe, "Religious Tolerations and Politics in Early North Carolina." *North Carolina Historical Review* 39 (July 1962): 268-69.

<sup>37</sup> John Locke, "The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 202-04.

<sup>38</sup> Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Virginia under Charles I and Cromwell, 1625-1660* (Williamsburg, Virginia 350th Anniversary Celebration Corporation, 1957), p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Wesley Frank Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607-1689* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 342.

<sup>40</sup> "An Act Concerning Marriages" (1670), in *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 184. This and the several laws of the year are sometimes referred to as the laws of 1669. It was 1669, Old Style, but 1670, New Style (which is our style).

<sup>41</sup> George Chalmers, *Political Annals of the Province of Carolina in Historical Collections of South Carolina*, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1836), p. 291. Francois-Xavier Martin,

*The History of North Carolina from the Earliest Period*, 2 vols. (New Orleans, La.: n.p., 1829), vol. 1, p. 145.

<sup>42</sup> John W. Moore, *History of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Alfred Williams and Co., 1880), p. 18. *CRNC*, ed. William L. Saunders, vol. 1, p. xxxiv. Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, pp. 30–31, 68–69. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 1st. ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Blair, "Mission," p. 601.



## Chapter 4

### Rogue's Harbor: The Reality of North Carolina's Reputation

Early North Carolina was distinguished from other colonies by its origin, initial independence, interaction with Native Americans, economy, religion and other aspects of its culture and social order. When the history of Roanoke is examined from the viewpoint of its distinctiveness, without the assumption that this Colony was like others, many old and still puzzling questions may be answered.

The most bitter of the issues long debated and little resolved has been North Carolina's early reputation as a sanctuary for fugitives from the other colonies. This issue has been the most sensitive because many have taken the allegation to be a reflection upon the honor of the State. North Carolina historians have hesitated to lend weight to the belief that for its first fifty years the Colony was a refuge for runaways, persons fleeing the law, and North Carolinians who read works of history in the nineteenth century were likely to join in the rejection of such a heritage for their homeland. The sensitive issue was exacerbated by state rivalries: It was Virginia, forever engaged in boundary disputes and sometimes fearful of competition, who first made the charge and continued to render notorious its neighbor's reputation. Around 1700 the charge became a slogan of imperial politics in the English Parliament and colonial civil service, as part of a campaign to revoke the Proprietors' charter. Such a scandal would never be permitted in a Royal Colony! The jibe against this State has been continued to the present by Virginians, South Carolinians and others, offered as wit but probably not so received: "North Carolina was populated by escaped convicts and fugitive slaves." Or in a saying that manages to cut

against all three states: "North Carolina is a valley of humiliation between two mountains of conceit."

At the beginning of this study, in seeking the origin of the Roanoke settlement, the argument, was advanced that the first settlers were fugitives, indentured servants. The suggestion rested upon the earliest descriptions of the settlement, the abundance of plantation frontiers inside Virginia, the occurrence of escapes by indentured servants in that colony, the geographic inhospitability of Roanoke for planters, and its ideal suitability for fugitives. What is now to be considered is the later period, after the establishment of the official colony, with laws and law officers (but under the authority of the old settler Assembly). Did North Carolina remain a special haven for the fugitives of other colonies?

The central document for this issue is a law on fugitives passed in 1670, the same year as the extraordinary marriage law discussed above. These are the two earliest known laws of the Albemarle Assembly, which have been held up with horror, or with more restrained comment, as illustrations of the (unworthy) social order and values of the Roanoke community. The fugitive law, "An Act Prohibiting Sueing of Any Person within 5 Yeares," reads:

Whereas there hath not binn sufficient encouragement hithertoo granted to persons transporting themselves and Estates into this County to plant or inhabit. For remedy whereof be it enacted . . . that noe person transporting themselves into this County after the date hereof shall be lyable to be sued during the terme and space of five yeares after their Arrival for any debt contracted or cause of action given without the County and that noe person liveing in this County shall on any pretence whatsoever receive any letter of Attorney Bill or account to recover any debt within the time above mentioned of a Debtor liveing here with out the said Debtor freely consent to it.<sup>1</sup>

The law extends sanctuary to fugitive debtors, but the fact of its enactment has been incorporated into attacks upon North Carolina for the harboring of other kinds of fugitives, especially escaped servants and slaves. During the period of servitude and flights from bondage in America, imprisonment for debt and escape from that penalty were also widespread social problems. Flight from debt was deemed a serious offense against law as well as property, and the offering of sanctuary by a recognized government could only be viewed as a scandalous moral offense by those who upheld the sanctity of property and law. Therefore



when North Carolina was also charged with receiving escaped servants and slaves, the debtor law would be mentioned: A government capable of the one was capable of the other, appears to have run the thinking.

The major obstacle to assessing the degree of truth in the charges of harboring fugitives of all kinds is that almost all of the multitude of allegations are from sources that were hostile to North Carolina: competitive Virginia, the empire-wide movement to revoke Proprietary grants, and local opponents of the old settler regime. Out of self-interest and prejudice they undoubtedly exaggerated the charges. But did they exaggerate a condition that truly prevailed to an unusual degree in North Carolina? Or did they create a total myth, with North Carolinians no more prone to harbor fugitives than the people of the other colonies? The following, among the most pointed charges against the Colony, illustrate this difficulty in interpretation.

In 1680 a deposed and deported North Carolina official, who had tried to oppose the interests of the Roanoke settlers, presented an affidavit of grievances to the colonial office in England, inaccurately terming his opponents rebels, and levelling against them a general charge of receiving fugitives:

... thus affaires have been carryed on to ye great damage of his Majty ye Lords Proprs and sundry of his Majestyes Leige subjects both there and in ye neighbouring Plantations [Colonies] by reason sundry fugitives have been entertained among the Albemarle Instructors &c . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Two years later the Governor of Virginia complained to the English Lords of Trade and Plantations:

As regards our neighbours, North Carolina is and always was the sink of America, the refuge of our renegades: and till in better order it is a danger to us.<sup>3</sup>

The very intemperance of the words, calling the Roanoke community the cesspool of the colonies, could be taken to show more than mere political rhetoric. The warning of danger may be understood as corroboration of the 1680 advisement that other colonies were affected by Roanoke's fugitive policy. And the date of the Governor's report is early for the imperial campaign against proprietary colonies. These considerations lend some substance to the complaint. Yet it could as well be Virginia's chronic antagonism to North Carolina, in the words

of an exceptionally choleric governor. Such are the problems of judging the reports on Roanoke as "Rogue's Harbor."

Other reports were solicited by England. From the 1690s on for over twenty years civil servants of the colonial office included the harboring of fugitives in their lists of the evils of the proprietary colonies which merited the revocation of their charters. When the lists were specific as to which evil pertained to which colony, the fugitive problem was assigned to North Carolina. The personal motives are not known for the architect of this campaign, the principal American agent of the colonial office, Edward Randolph. It is known that he made his crusade for uniform royal government in the colonies his life's work, often alone and unheeded, until at the time of his death, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, new political alignments were making his concern a major issue of English colonial policy.<sup>4</sup> No one has accused Randolph of having been a liar, of fabricating proprietary weaknesses in order to further his cause. The problem in weighing his reports and English pronouncements based on such reports is that all colonies, proprietary or royal, had their weaknesses from the English point of view, but Randolph and associates, inevitably as part of their work, picked out and emphasized the problems of the proprietary colonies.

In 1696 Randolph reported to the English authorities, concerning North Carolina, "Pyrats & runaway Servants resort to this place from Virginia etc.," and he associated this with the charge that North Carolina possessed "no regular government,"<sup>5</sup> a statement that can only refer to the situation as we know it from other sources: The old Roanoke settlers ruled and removed officials of whom they disapproved while the Proprietors remained benignly aloof, except to collect their dues.

The next year the English Council of Trade wrote the Lords Proprietors of Carolina in circumspect language, avoiding a direct confrontation at that time:

His Majesty having been informed by complaints from severall hands of the undue methods practiced in some of his Colonies for seducing the Inhabitants from others, and being sensible how much that practice is contrary to the Common Interest of the whole has commanded us to write to the severall Governors or Governments of each Colony that they take care that effectual Laws be made in each of their respective Governments against the receiving and harbouring not only of Deserters, but also of such fugitives as leave any of his Plantations contrary to the



Laws provided for that purpose in each plantation respectively; Which therefore we accordingly recommend to your observation for the Province of Carolina.<sup>6</sup>

In 1700, as the political battle to rescind proprietary charters sharpened, Edward Randolph drew up "Articles of High Crimes and Misdemeanors Charged upon the Governors in the Severall Proprieties on the Continent of America and Islands Adjacent," The charges against North Carolina were the wrecking by cannon and the plundering of a Virginia ship beached by storm upon the Outer Banks, and the reiteration regarding this Colony, "... tis a place which receives Pirates, Runaways, and Illegal Traders," Again Randolph linked the Colony's reception of fugitives to the unrestricted domination of the old settlers: "They have no settled Government among them ..."<sup>7</sup>

The next year the Board of Trade and Plantations, from the many years of investigation largely conducted by Randolph, recommended that legislation be introduced in Parliament to revoke the proprietary and other colonial charters, and to place all colonies under governors appointed by and responsible to Parliament and King. Unlike Randolph's reports, the colonies were not specified to which each of the nine charges pertained, but the special sin of North Carolina was listed:

... by Harboursing of Servants and fugitives, these Governments tend greatly to the undermining the Trade and *Welfare* of the other Plantations, and seduce and draw away the People therof; By which Diminution of Hands the rest of the Colonies more beneficial to England do very much suffer.<sup>8</sup>

This was an imperial policy statement concerning the labor problem in the colonies. English and American commerce depended on colonial cash crops; colonial agricultural systems depended on an ample labor supply. The "more beneficial" colonies, those under royal government, were subject to English influence, supported by American commercial and export agricultural interests, towards the protection and progress of the imperial economy, in respect to the labor problem as well as the others. But not so with the proprietary colonies, which were beyond royal command and too often unresponsive to the grand design for empire. In the face of the general labor problem, a proprietary colony even dared to harbor laborers escaped from bondage. For this as for other reasons, proprietary colonies must go. The tightness and cogency of this statement can be taken as a reflection of reality as well

as one more politically motivated allegation to discredit proprietary government.

Then, in 1708, attaching himself to the imperial campaign against proprietaries, the President of the Royal Council of Virginia used the popular charge against North Carolina to excuse the lack of progress in his Colony:

[ . . . besides the distempers usual among our new Negroes wch carry off not a few of them, many of our poorer sort of Inhabitants daily remove into our neighboring Colonies, especially to North Carolina, which is the reason that the number of our Inhabitants doth not increase proportionately to what might be expected.<sup>9</sup>

The bureaucratic self-interest of the report is obvious, but the emphatic "daily" removals of the poor which is alleged suggests that the acting governor felt secure in his excuse: that the problem was 'common knowledge' among his planter associates.

The foregoing illustrations show how difficult it is to determine the authenticity of North Carolina's reputation as a harbor for fugitives. Every source was motivated by political self-interest in the attack upon North Carolina; yet several sources display internal evidence that there was more to the charges than partisan fabrication.

Since no historian has discussed the issue at any length, it can be assumed that they reached their verdicts from their general impression of the sources. No wonder these reasonable and well-informed persons have divided quite evenly in their answer, both the earlier and the more recent scholars. In the negative, dismissing the charges that this Colony harbored fugitives more than the other colonies, one nineteenth century historian expressed doubt that there ever had been a law encouraging fugitive debtors (or civil marriages.)<sup>10</sup> When the 1670 laws were published a few years later in the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, the editor William Saunders defended the honor of his State and explained away the debtor law and Virginia's gibes by pointing to an earlier Virginia law giving debtors from abroad a period of grace: North Carolina was not the only colony, nor the first, to have such a law.<sup>11</sup>

The first of the professional twentieth century historians of North Carolina answers the allegations against his State<sup>12</sup> concerning runaways by quoting at length the statements made in 1699 by North Carolina Governor Henderson Walker, refuting charges levelled by Virginia Governor Francis Nicholson:



... however the matter may have been misrepresented to yor Excellency I assure you yt [that] neither our laws nor practise deserves such an imputation of evil neighbourhood neither are there any runaways harbored here yt we can discover upon diligent inquiry nor shall any such thing be suffered so far as it is in our power to prevent it We have (besides statutes against Vagrants) a particular law yt enjoins all persons on a penalty to apprehend runaway Negroes and prohibits ye harboring of them on ye penalty of ten shillings every night over & above all damage yt can be proved & I propose to recommend it to ye next Assembly if any thing may be done more effectively to prevent such a mischief.<sup>13</sup>

A month later he followed up with another letter to his powerful colleague of Virginia:

I hope yor Excelcy (notwithstanding any misrepresentation that hath been heretofore made) is of opinion that it is not our purpose to countenance ye harbouring of runaways but to punish it with ye utmost severity ...<sup>14</sup>

Charles Andrews, deeply immersed in the history of the resumption of proprietary charters and the involved political struggle towards that end, concluded that the problem of escaped slaves and servants, though very severe in North Carolina, was no worse there than elsewhere, resumptionist propaganda to the contrary notwithstanding.<sup>15</sup>

An equal number of historians have answered the question affirmatively: There was a special fugitive problem in colonial North Carolina. The two earliest historians, having read copies of the laws of 1670 before their publication, took the debtor law, along with the marriage law, as a sign of a deviant social order which they both abhorred.<sup>16</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century Francis Hawks, North Carolina's social historian, though he could not find a copy of the debtor law, and doubted that the colony had officially encouraged fugitives, nevertheless from the sources available to him concluded that "Albemarle was a 'safety valve'" for Virginia, and that the presence of the lawless and the disreputable was a key to the understanding of the Colony's society during the Proprietorial period—a social order from which royal government at last happily redeemed the Colony.<sup>17</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century the State's historian of slavery, though also denying any official encouragement for escaped servants and slaves, gave credence to the charges that the Colony was a

haven, reading the sources in the light of North Carolina's swamps and untamed forests, natural sanctuaries for fugitives from Virginia servitude.<sup>18</sup> Today's historian of North Carolina, with the authors associated with him in his works, though dismissing the debtor law as insignificant, and rightly stressing Virginia's bias, still maintains the judgment that runaways from across the border probably constituted a special problem in early colonial North Carolina.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, it is appropriate that the current scholarly summary of Virginia colonial history supports the testimony of Virginia's early governors: North Carolina, as a sanctuary for escaped servants, was a nuisance to the Old Dominion.<sup>20</sup>

This division among the historians is most understandable in view of the ambiguity of most sources. Must then the question remain moot forever? No; for only a few sources that indicate an authentic condition are sufficient to validate a dimension of reality in the myriad otherwise dubious sources. There is enough additional evidence to tip the balance, when collected and analysed from the standpoint of the history of the enslaved.

The two most weighty pieces of evidence offered to dismiss Albemarle's reputation as sanctuary for fugitives prove to be insubstantial upon close examination. One of them, Saunders's reduction of the debtor law to insignificance by pointing to an earlier Virginia enactment giving a period of grace to immigrant debtors, has been repeated by later historians. They have unfortunately called the one a copy of the other. It is not, nor are these laws to the same effect. There is a difference that is crucial to the question of the harboring and prevalence of fugitives. The Virginia law expressly referred to fugitive debtors *from England*.<sup>21</sup> But the North Carolina law made no such proviso, and has been taken by all, correctly, to invite fugitives from nearby colonies, Virginia in particular, and South Carolina and Maryland. The Virginia law was obnoxious only to creditors in England, it in no way undermined social stability or good order in America, and it was in accord with the English as well as American policy of encouraging immigration from the old world to the new. But to the extent that the North Carolina law was successful in attracting fugitives from other colonies, it interfered with the progress of those colonies, and undermined their efforts to build a stable society and respect for law throughout the still fragile settlements of British North America. Saunders's contribution was a red herring. This law remains a real affront to the advocates of property and obedience.

The other of the most weighty evidences to absolve North Carolina of the crime of abetting runaways also fades under scrutiny. It is Governor Henderson Walker's reply to the charges of Governor



Nicholson of Virginia, already quoted in part. At most the North Carolina Governor's apology is a plea of innocence by the spokesman of the accused. But the weakness of Walker's defense is its defensiveness. He writes like a man who is not sure what he can say.

His statement affirms that he is trying to solve the problem, not that he is succeeding (*italics supplied*):

... neither are there any runaways harbored her yt [*that*]  
we can discover upon diligent inquiry not shall any such  
thing be suffered so far as it is in our power to prevent it.

From our knowledge of the terrain and the peculiarly tender consciences of the Roanoke settlers, we may judge that the Governor was painfully aware of his limitations.

His colony already has a law against harboring runaways, he says, and he can think of nothing more to do, but nervously he hopes that someone else can think of a remedy:

... I propose to recommend it to ye next Assembly if  
any thing may be done more effectively to prevent such a  
mischief.<sup>22</sup>

The Governor also petulantly turns the charge back upon the Virginia accuser with the familiar feeble taunt, *Your're another!* (not previously quoted):

... I crave leave to intimate to you that there must  
needs have been as great neglect amongst the people in  
Virginia as ever hath been here otherwise such runaways  
could not pass so far, for we observe that there are few or  
none that are taken here or supposed to pass by but what  
travel much further through ye inhabitants of Virginia  
than the whole extent of this Governmt comes to, for  
instance this which Mr Harwood carries out hath travelled  
on the high road from beyond Rappahannock and passed  
all the public Ferrys although Virginia much thicker  
peopled. I dont add this as a pretense for our negligence  
but to ye end ye inhabitants of Virginia may be more  
careful that both may joyn to prevent such a mischief.<sup>23</sup>

Distracted, the Governor also conjures up two dream solutions: The fugitives die during their escape. Or they pass through North Carolina

on their way to South Carolina! Yes, through a colony where slavery has not developed, to seek refuge in a slavery colony: *na*

Not long ago information was made to me & ye Council that one Grand at ye Sand-Banks had entertained some persons suspected to be runaways from Esq Corbin for which he now stands bound over to ye next Generall Court I myself at my own charge sent as far as Pamplico after those runaways and since here [hear] advice yt some of vm [them] died by famine in ye uninhabited part of this Government And I believe many other yt fly this way are lost after ye same or such like manner endeavoring to escape to S. Carolina.<sup>24</sup>

The solution to the problem, that fugitives perish in the wilderness, was suggested to Governor Walker by a captured fugitive, who informed his captors that other runaways in his company had died, and thus prevented further search for his brothers.

It was wholly my forgetfullness that I did not before acquaint yor Excelcy yt I have made as strict an inquiry as possible concerning Madame Smith's Negros & doe assure yor Excelcy that they are not in this Governmt nor any other that can be suspected to be run away except one of Esqr Corbin's servants who lieth here sick and reports that three of his companions are dead to the Southward and one Negro more in the Marshall's custody who was imported hither in a sloop . . .<sup>25</sup>

Thus did the ploy of an outcast fugitive enter a colonial governor's repertoire of statecraft. Harassed Henderson Walker, in his defense of North Carolina, does not provide a refutation of the charges, but instead offers good intentions, is at a loss for new devices, sullenly returns the accusation upon the accuser, and in desperation proffers fantasy solutions, in short, demonstrates that the North Carolina Governor in the last year of the seventeenth century could not cope with the charge of harboring fugitives.

Besides the weaknesses demonstrated in the two weightiest pieces of evidence offered to clear North Carolina of the charge of sheltering runaways, there are a number of sources which offer positive indication that North Carolina was in fact a sanctuary for the outcasts of other colonies. These are the same kind of documents as those offered at the beginning of the chapter to illustrate the difficulties of rendering



judgment, in that they contain both self-interest, bias and propaganda on one hand, and signs of authenticity on the other. The forthcoming positive evidence that Roanoke continued to be a haven differs from the documents cited earlier in that these reflect concrete aspects of reality to such a degree that the signs of authenticity of reporting outweigh the political motivation which is also present. The strengths of this evidence are the contexts and circumstantial detail. The contexts of the charges against North Carolina in these cases are the varied specific problems of the reporters at the moment they complain, rather than Virginia's ongoing competition with her neighbor or the continuing massive imperial campaign against proprietary government. The reporters focus on themselves at the time and place of their problem, an orientation which sharply reduces the likelihood of sweeping exaggerations for the sake of lofty colonial or English policy. Also the account of detail in these reports, the careful description of the circumstances, suggests a considerable degree of authenticity, or else a rare kind of egregious fabrication that is highly unlikely because of its danger to the fabricator.

*Rur* The first report (1679) is an elaborate blood-curdling prophecy of the future. Unless the old settler regime is forcibly removed from control of the colony, Roanoke will be inundated by every kind of fugitive from the other colonies, from this natural fortress the desperado hordes will raid back into the other colonies, and finally there will be the "great mischief," the revolt of the desperate elements of society in the other colonies, aided by their Roanoke brethren.<sup>26</sup> Though an expression of partisan interest or panic, the prophecy is a remarkably accurate history of future events on a smaller scale, the development of the maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp. For the seventeenth century however what was predicted was maroon control of all North Carolina, at a time when the other colonies had not achieved the social stability and military power they were to enjoy in later centuries.

The detail of the prophecy shows a concern about the fugitive problem in relation to North Carolina that is independent of the bias of competitive Virginia and the movement to revoke proprietary charters. More important as evidence of the realities is the concluding statement that the movement of fugitives into the Colony has already begun. The detailed and accurate geographical information on North Carolina and the other colonies, showing the viability of an independent Roanoke and the natural security for fugitives on the trail, indicates an informant both thoughtful and knowledgeable of conditions. This person, or persons, also detect that in the character of the old settlers there is that which would not be adverse to the welcoming of new fugitives to

Roanoke. Read in light of the above impressive statement, the testimony of the ousted official (quoted earlier) takes on greater significance, though when read by itself it is of little value as evidence of an authentic problem.

The charges directed by Governor Francis Nicholson of Virginia to Governor Henderson Walker in 1699, though part of the politics of Virginia rivalry and the movement against proprietary government, are also concrete complaints. First the Attorney General of Virginia wrote on behalf of his Governor:

His Excellency has heard nothing of Made [Madam] Smith and Negros supposed to be run away & harboured in your Governmt which he expected he should before this and has also commanded me to acquaint you that several servants and slaves are daily running from hence into your Governmt and are there concealed wch he hopes you will take care to prevent by a proclamacon to yt [that] purpose or such other methods as you shall judge most expedient . . . <sup>27</sup>

Next the Governor of Virginia wrote directly:

I am very glad to here that you have statutes against Vagrants and a particular law about Negros but you must give me leave to say that unless they be ~~vigorously put in execution~~ I fear they will not signify much I am sorry not to hear any thing of the Negros that ran away from Madam Smith a copy of whose letter and the description you were so kind as to take from me in order to inquire after ym [them] I showed Esqr Corbin that part of your letter to me concerning his servants and I told him to write to you which I here he did and returned you thanks &c. If such fellows as Grandee be but made examples I suppose it will be one of the properest ways to prevent ye like clandestine dealings of the future.

. . . This is designed (God willing) [meaning not clear] by one Mr Joseph Harwood who is out by Con [Colonel?] Edmd Jennings one of his Maj. Honble Councill here to look after one David Ross a Carpenter lately run away from him as also one Thomas Roberts a Welchman &c. who ran away from the Revd Mr John Bernard a Clerk &c.<sup>28</sup>



From this correspondence there appear to have been at least eight or nine escaped slaves and servants (perhaps several more: Madam Smith's slaves), believed to have fled to North Carolina during a three month's period. The Virginia Governor's personal acquaintance with Squire Corbin, and Edmund Jennings's membership in the Royal Council of Virginia, suggest that the Governor may have personally interceded for those with access to his court, rather than the generality of planters who had lost a slave or servant. This would increase the number of fugitives. Moreover the Governor says nothing of escaped debtors, protected by North Carolina law. Altogether this is an impressive total of apparently authentic cases which the Governor includes along with his political motivations. In this correspondence there appears the reality as well as the reputation of North Carolina as the haven sought by fugitives.

In 1708 the Royal Council of Virginia held a full-scale discussion of the Colony's failure to grow in population. The minutes of the session show that many dimensions of the problem were discussed: the lack of new land, most of Virginia's frontiers having been settled; the wearing out of land in the regions originally planted; the frustration of Virginia's first generation of native-born and indentured servants who had finished their terms, leading them to emigrate; the cutting off from use of convenient land by the boundary dispute with North Carolina; the better terms for land offered by that colony; and the flight of debtors from Virginia.

When the last topic on the agenda was reached, the spokesmen of the creditor interest on the Council of Virginia announced good news: North Carolina had at last amended its debtor law, so that *Virginians* might now bring justice to these fugitives. (Sanctuary was still offered to fugitives of the other colonies.) Before the repeal, said the Council, the North Carolina law had enabled

a great many people of uneasy circumstances or dishonest inclinations to run thither to avoid their creditors secure themselves a safe retreat

It is significant for an understanding of Roanoke society and of the meaning of the debtor law to the other colonies that the Council of Virginia considered that the law had relevance to the disaffected classes of society in general, and was not merely a problem between creditors and debtors, as evidenced by the wording "people of uneasy circumstances or dishonest inclinations."

But the spokesmen of the creditors also brought bad news to the meeting: Though they could now sue in North Carolina,

there are such difficulties in the prosecution thereof, partly by the distractions of that Country which has no settled Government & partly by the protection those debtors find among persons of the like circumstances & principles that it is but lost labor to sue for them.<sup>29</sup>

It was public opinion, not law, that made North Carolina a danger to the other colonies, the Virginia magnates had at last concluded. New fugitives fleeing the social order of Virginia were harbored by old settlers who in their time or their fathers' time had fled the same place for the same reason. The principles of the Roanoke community were different from those of Virginia because the settlers, most of the old and many of the new, were of the poor and the outcast. So stated the proceedings of the Council of Virginia. This reasoned analysis and the other subjects discussed at that session on the lack of growth of the colony suggest intelligent planters' and merchants' discussing real problems more than mere political rhetoric, though the problems created by North Carolina's uniqueness were also grist for the propaganda mills of Virginia and the Empire. *W*

In 1707 and 1708 Governor John Seymour of Maryland made loud complaints against North Carolina to the English Lord of Trade and Plantations. They passed on his message to the Privy Council, recommending royal nullification of the North Carolina debtor law, and judicial withdrawal of the North Carolina charter, the colony to revert to the Crown. That such action would be recommended thirty-seven years after the enactment of the law, and in the same year that the Colony weakened its law by amendment, recognizing the claims of Virginia creditors, is clear indication that the Lords of Trade were motivated not by substantive but by political, antiproprietary considerations.

Governor Seymour's concerns were more complex. He was incensed that Virginia claims were now recognized in North Carolina, while the open invitation to Maryland fugitives remained. That law, he exclaimed, "has occasioned great numbers to flye from this Province hither..." At that particular time Maryland was suffering an upsurge in her loss of population to North Carolina; not fraudulent, frivolous or ill-advised debtors, but the general poor of the land, driven into bankruptcy by an economic depression accompanying Queen Anne's War. The Governor pleaded for legal relief for these refugees driven by forces beyond their control.

But Seymour held no sympathy for the morally guilty debtors whom he believed to be among the Albemarle fugitives; and he knew that an even more sinister sort of fugitive had fled there from Maryland, the subversive: "... as our poverty increases so fresh villanies are



carried on entirely to subvert the Government." Amidst the depression's evictions and jailings for debt, agitators preached revolution to the despairing poor. Though the distress was predominantly economic, despair and agitation were also directly related to the War, to the news of French, "Indian" and Spanish attacks upon New England and South Carolina. Without contemporary evidence, it may be surmised that old communal political antagonisms contributed to the discontent, dating back fifteen years to the forceful overthrow of the Roman Catholic proprietary government of Maryland by a "Protestant Association" and England's benign sanction of that act by the establishment of a royal colony.

Whether near capture by the law, or seeking contacts, agitators for a social revolution in Maryland fled to North Carolina. Then it was that Governor Seymour took direct action, sending a "well mann'd" sloop to Albemarle to protest that Colony's harboring of fugitives in general, and in particular to pursue the radical emigres. Understandably he expected trouble from the colonial authorities of North Carolina, but instead received cooperation in the search for the seditionists, which pleasant surprise he honorably reported to the Lords of Trade and Plantations.

Two of the agitators were apprehended and brought back to Maryland in chains; their chief, uncaptured, also returned and went underground again. According to the Governor this revolutionary privately offered to inform in exchange for pardon. But at the same time he continued his agitation. Claiming to be a Quaker, he distributed leaflets written in Quaker style, posting them on walls and dropping them along the streets. They announced the imminent descent of a French fleet and 30,000 "Indians" upon Maryland. Governor Seymour, in the face of threats domestic and foreign, mobilized the Colony.<sup>30</sup>

These details of Maryland history point clearly to the logic of evidence which also adheres to the other documents offered. The overwhelming interest of the Lords of Trade in the alleged misdeeds of North Carolina arose from their usefulness in the campaign to revoke proprietary charters. The Governor of Maryland as a good servant of the Crown shared this concern. But during the internal crisis of his colony he also found North Carolina, the haven and hope of fugitives, to be much involved in his immediate practical problems: the spread of bankruptcy, the growth of desperation among the poor, insurrectionary agitation, and even a seaborne posse into Albemarle. The reality of North Carolina's singular place in British North America and its threat to other colonies emerges alongside its reputation exploited by political forces.

The last document or set of documents to be cited to show the reality of North Carolina as a haven coexisting with the exploitation of its reputation is the report of Virginia boundary commissioners in 1710. Entering the little-known, swampy no-man's land, the commissioners took testimony from settlers as to the names of rivers and "Indian tribes" when these pioneers had first arrived, seeking to relate present locations to places assigned to Virginia fifty years before, or earlier. Some settlers gave answers pleasing to Virginia; others did not. Commented the commissioners:

It is . . . remarkable that the witnesses on the part of Carolina are all very ignorant persons, & most of them of ill fame & reputation, & on yt accot [that account] were forced to fly from Virginia to Carolina . . . Whereas on the other hand, the witnesses for proving her Majtys right are persons of clear fame & eminent figure in this Country . . . <sup>31</sup>

Border commissioners were inevitably a party to Virginia's enmity towards North Carolina and the maligning of her name. Yet they underwent an unusual experience in the outlands of Virginia, and their report surely contains reflections of a reality independent of their political affiliation: They found two societies on the border, one of Virginia gentlemen who favored the claims of that colony and royal government, the other of the poor, who favored the claims of North Carolina and abhorred Virginia for the memories they brought with them in their migration. The commissioners were told by their gentlemen supporters: Those hostile witnesses were fugitives. What was perceived clearly and what was distorted by bias and interest are intertwined in the report.

Five sources have been offered, which include the tendentiousness of North Carolina's political enemies, but also sufficient signs of the reality of North Carolina's social position and practice to validate these sources. They are evidence that North Carolina was, to an exceptional degree, a haven for fugitives. The documents span thirty-one years of North Carolina's domination by the old settler regime: 1679, 1699, 1707 (two independent events) and 1710. Each context is different, but none are primarily political pronouncements, and all are focussed on specific, immediate problems demanding solution: the danger to other colonies of an independent Albemarle; the escaped slaves of the friends of a Virginia governor; a lag in population growth; bankruptcies and sedition in Maryland; and the gathering of boundary testimonies. The specific context implies an independence of motivation and a

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seriousness of purpose that strengthen the authenticity of the references to North Carolina. The materials on the fugitive problem in North Carolina are afterthoughts or by-products of the original and central concern, and therefore more reliable than deliberately prepared policy statements on the colony, such as those organized by Edward Randolph and promoted by the Lords of Trade and Plantations. The sources offered are also highly circumstantial, detailed: cautionary geography and the unrolling of prophecy; the listing of fugitives; the order, elaboration and thoughtfulness of the Council's agenda; the cloak-and-dagger adventures of a Maryland Governor; and the bemused reactions of Jamestown gentlemen in the wetlands of Roanoke. Such data, both particularized and amplified, are signs of true concern and the search for solutions, not the exercise of producing copy for public relations. Clear contexts and inner coherence make good evidence.

The two remaining sources for early North Carolina's exceptional harboring of fugitives are of a different sort. There is no problem of distinguishing bias against North Carolina from the reporting of reality since these documents have no relevance to the campaign against proprietary government or Virginia's competitiveness.

The first of these sources are the Lords Proprietors themselves, their policy and practice in the search for settlers. It will be remembered that when the Proprietors first learned of the existence of an unauthorized settlement in their territory, they resolved to minister to the requirements of those settlers, however strange, upon the principle that any settlers are better than none. Next, when the problem arose of securing immigrants for the unoccupied portions of North Carolina and for South Carolina, the Proprietors adopted another unorthodox policy. They did not concentrate their recruitment efforts upon special social elements in Europe as did the other colonies: Puritans for New England; English squires with their indentured servants for Virginia, Maryland and the Caribbean islands; at a later time Quakers and German sectarians for Pennsylvania. Instead the Proprietors of Carolina determined to attract settlers already in the new world, from the established colonies. It is well known that the nucleus of South Carolina were planters who had found Barbados too small for their ambition. Inevitably the authorities of the existing colonies opposed this poaching upon their preserves for labor and capital, at a time when ample population was a sign of colonial wealth, and the transition from indentured servitude to chattel slavery was not yet clearly seen as the direction of progress for a sure supply of cheap and plentiful labor. But in response to the objections of the other colonies the Carolina Proprietors boldly announced that all the island and mainland colonies were their fishing grounds for immigration to Carolina. The proclamation, "An answer to

*Certain Demands and Proposals Made by Several Gentlemen and Persons of Good Quality in the Island of Barbados to the Lord Proprietors of the Province of Carolina* was issued in 1663:

We shall likewise endeavour to procure his Majesty's Letters to the Governors of the Barbados and Caribbia Islands; Virginia, New England and Bermothos [Bermuda] requiring them not to hinder any free and unengaged persons from going to Carolina to settle upon any frivolous pretences whatsoever but rather to further the good and speedy settlement thereof . . .<sup>32</sup>

The Lords Proprietors were seeking immigrants who, though not bound servants, were yet dissatisfied with their prospects. The conflict between Carolina and the other colonies revealed in this document is quite similar to the later conflict between these parties over labor: the removal of human resources, enslaved or surplus labor, from other colonies to North Carolina by means of flight. The wording of this document seems to reveal a painful awareness on the part of the Proprietors of the possibility that unfree persons and other fugitives from the law might become involved in the conflict over human resources. So carefully they word their proposal, lest it be thought that the bosom cronies of Charles II seek to attract the enslaved or other legal fugitives: They address "Gentlemen and Persons of Good Quality" the "free and unengaged." The Proprietors were evidently as self-conscious in their rectitude as their competitors were suspicious. It is interesting to recall in this connection that the North Carolina fugitive debtor law of 1670 begins, "whereas there hath not been sufficient Encouragement hitherto granted to persons transporting themselves and their Estates into this County to plant or inhabit. For remedy whereof be it enacted . . ." It was part of the same general recruitment policy—from other English colonies, not Europe.

In 1682 a tract to encourage immigration to Carolina was published, which continued the policy of recruiting from the established colonies, but came much closer to the invitation that could never be openly made: to fugitives from servitude or justice.

The tract invites immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland and the West Indies, but extends an especial invitation to persons of the North American colonies. The focus upon tapping the population resources to the north of Carolina is emphasized by the specifying of the goal of the migration invited: "... Albemarle (otherwise called Roanoke) . . ." This was a most delicate and daring strategem, considering that the Governor of Virginia had complained to the Lords



of Trade and Plantations only the previous year of North Carolina, "The sink of America, the refuge of our renegades . . . a danger to us." Perhaps the Proprietors were prepared to disavow this anonymous prospectus published in their behalf (written by one "R.F."):

But the hopeful progress of this flourishing Country invights some Northern Americans to emulate such sacred sanctuary as without sacrilidge is tolerated to people of tender Conscience.

In regard to the sanctuary here offered "to people of tender Conscience" it should be remembered that the matters of conscience in Albemarle so tenderly handled by the Proprietors in the 1660s were not religious, the early settlers eschewing churches, but a curious amalgam of values, attitudes and way of life. The recruiting tract of 1682, not resting with the above subversion of the religious and social order of Virginia and other colonies, proceeds to enumerate the categories of "Northern Americans" to whom the invitation is addressed. The ambitious are included, but not first. Leading the list of those bid come are the infirm, the physically wasted, who will find healing and strength in the new atmosphere, then the poverty-stricken and outcast, who will obtain a plenteous livelihood and renewal of spirit. In the words of the tract:

Moreover its a salubrious Air to the sick and diseased; and a generous retrimment to necessitous, and abject Families; as also the afflurance [affluence] of such as study to be rich.

Sick and diseased, necessitous and abject: the author knew his plantation colonies. The passage comes remarkably close to the invitation of fugitives, if it has not indeed reached that point in not so very veiled language. In the usual colonial tracts to encourage immigration directed to Europeans, the comfort and opportunity of the new land are extolled, and an invitation is directed to the poor. But that invitation is to sell themselves into indentured servitude. When however the persons addressed are the haggard, the destitute, the "abject" of the mainland colonies to the north of Albemarle, the invitation is to remove themselves from a society that has no decent place for them, or to flee the bondage that legally possesses them.

But the Carolina tract is still not through. Lest the meaning escape any for whom it is intended. Many pages later the reader is reminded:

... it [Carolina] begins to depopulate some American Settlements, by reason of those Encouragements . . . <sup>33</sup>

*Send your low*  
 The Lords Proprietors of Carolina were unable or unwilling to restrict themselves to the usual colonial mode of recruitment, in Europe: unable because they came late to the field, or as cavaliers lacked business sense; unwilling perhaps because the Stuart grandees are desperados writ large. They must needs trespass. Thus the motto of nineteenth century industrialists becomes appropriate for seventeenth century Proprietors: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me!" Those who invited immigrants in the nineteenth century did not pretend to like their persons or their manners. Nor did the Carolina Proprietors. They managed to filch some planters from Barbados for South Carolina. For North Carolina, unable to procure normative planters with indentured servants, and already having that Roanoke settlement, the Proprietors were content to receive, and invite, the "renegades" of Virginia and Maryland. From such human increment, wealth and progress could not be expected. But the Proprietors' quitrents, their dues, would increase.

*Y*  
 From this understanding of the Carolina Proprietors' immigration policies, it is clear that North Carolina's harboring of fugitives was sanctioned by those Lords, never officially, never openly, but sanctioned. The actual harboring, the succor and the security, was ministered to each ragged heap as it tumbled into the settlement by the old settlers of Roanoke, for utterly different motives from those of the Proprietors. Yet perhaps there was a strange affinity between old settlers and Proprietors, as both were desperate folk: the desperate English colonial poor, with their Native American and Black cousins, and the last English representatives of the feudal order, the reality dead, but the spirit desperately lingering, half piratical, half paternal. Both Roanoke settlers and Carolina Proprietors for sure stood outside the vigorous growing dynamic circle of the future, wherein progressive merchants and commercial planters created a mighty empire and erected the opulent slave colonies of the South. Ironically (or wonderfully) the early use of the word "sanctuary" for North Carolina's relation to those who fled to her, in the document quoted above, is not from the enemies of the deviant colony, but from Roanoke's own spokesmen.

The last source to be offered in support of the reality of North Carolina's reputation, like the preceding one, does not demand the separation of biased political charges from factual reports. Voted by the North Carolina Assembly in 1723, it is "An Act for an Additional Tax on All Free Negroes, Mulattoes, Mustees, and such Persons, Male and



Female, as now Are, or hereafter Shall Be, Intermarried with any such Persons, Resident in this Government." The preamble shows that this was a law for a very special problem, not one of the standardized laws which the colonies copied from one another:

Whereas Complaints have been made by divers Freeholders and other Inhabitants of this Government, Or great Numbers of Free Negroes, Mulattoes, and other Persons of mixed Blood, that have lately removed themselves into this Government, and that several of them have intermarried with the white Inhabitants of this Province . . . <sup>34</sup>

It was enacted that such persons should be enrolled as taxpayers, and henceforth be liable for taxes as much as any other person. The statement that some had already had time to find spouses in North Carolina, the implication that there was a period when such persons were not sought out by the census-takers, and the likelihood that such a great number did not arrive at one time, suggest that their removal to North Carolina "lately" refers to a span of some years, back to the previous decade, when the final overthrow of the old settler regime (1714) had not yet been recognized as final, or had not yet occurred. The law is evidence that at the end of the Roanoke community and its domination of the government, the African Americans of other colonies, more numerous now from the growth of the slave trade and chattel slavery, had come to recognize North Carolina as a place of refuge. Such an understanding could only be based upon the reputation of the old regime lately overthrown, not the new government and social order which had overturned the old settlers and now sought to discourage the new wave of immigration.

To conclude the case for the reality of early North Carolina's reputation as a sanctuary, two arguments will be offered. One is that the propaganda to that effect which emanated from Virginia and the campaign to revoke proprietary charters was a self-fulfilling exaggeration. The bias was widespread among Virginians and colonial civil servants: Some of their reports contain little or nothing else; even the authentic records for North Carolina as a haven are imbued with the prejudice. North Carolinians were painfully aware of the stereotype: Governor Henderson Walker then, many more in later times. The reputation popularized by political opponents of North Carolina was well known as far away as Maryland. It became a North American scandal. If then we grant to indentured servants, slaves and other poor the general human alertness to rumors vital to their interests, these too

must have heard and responded to North Carolina's reputation: Everybody saying North Carolina a good place for runaways. Let's go! The propaganda must be taken as one cause for flights to North Carolina, and therefore one more reason to believe that North Carolina constituted a special problem for other colonies in reality as well as in prejudice and political bias.

Lastly, the material presented which showed that pre-colonial Roanoke was founded by fugitives, and the documents and arguments now presented which demonstrate that North Carolina continued to be a sanctuary for another fifty years, are mutually reinforcing evidence. It is understandable that previous fugitives would welcome new ones (as stated by the Virginia Council's discussion on population loss). And it is reasonable that new fugitives would seek a country that had been successfully reached and first settled by runaways of the previous generation.

To summarize: the North Carolina fugitive debtor law was distinctive; Henderson Walker's defense demonstrates weakness only; some biased reports include reflections of reality, namely, the prophetic warning, the detailed escapes referred to Walker, the Virginia Council discussion on population, the adventures of the Maryland Governor and the observations of the boundary commissioners; the Proprietors' policy for recruiting immigrants reinforced the harboring of fugitives by old settlers; the attempted mass migration of African Americans during the second decade of the eighteenth century expressed Roanoke's reputation among that people; political propaganda against North Carolina promoted escape to that Colony; and Roanoke's origin as a maroon community encouraged the continuing immigration of fugitives.

These lead to the conclusion: Though there were runaways between all colonies, and the government of North Carolina never publicly or officially invited or sanctioned the harboring of persons escaped from bondage, nevertheless North Carolina up to 1714 was the pre-eminent and most suitable haven for fugitives in British North America.

Now we can see another cause for the persistence and remarkable strength of the distinctive Roanoke culture and social order, besides the character of the first settlers and the isolation of the country. The immigration of new settlers, with similar values to the old, constantly reinforced and probably reinvigorated the original social order and culture, more than offsetting the influence of the few normative immigrants who desired to remould the Colony in the image of Virginia.

This is the most important element of the Roanoke culture. More significant than the satisfaction with a subsistence economy and the



recreation ethic, the quaker religion or even the exceptional ethnic relations, was the Roanoke community's devotion to the reception of new fugitives. It was the central organizing component of the culture, in that it was the community's origin and the basis for its growth. There is nothing at all complex about the reason, the cause behind this cultural value. Brothers and sisters simply help brothers and sisters. That is all.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Acts of the Assembly of Albemarle Ratified and Confirmed by the Proprietors the 20th Janry 1669 (-70)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 183-84.

<sup>2</sup> "Affidavit of Thos. Miller Concerning the Rebellion of Carolina" (January 31, 1680), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup> "Lord Culpeper to Lords of Trade and Plantations" (December 12, 1681) in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, vol. 11, *America and West Indies, 1681-1685* (H.M. Public Record Office: 1898), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies 1676-1703* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. ix-xi, 204. One of the conclusions of this study is that we shall never know whether most of the charges against private colonies were true. The purposes and attitudes on each side were so different as to give two contextual truths. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> "Mr Randolph's Memo about Illegal Trade in the Plantations Mentioned in Foregoing Presentment" (November 10, 1696), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 467.

<sup>6</sup> "Letter of the Councill of Trade to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina" (February 9, 1697), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 475.

<sup>7</sup> "Articles of High Crimes and Misdemeanors Charged upon the Governors in the Severall Proprieties on the Continent of America and Islands Adjacent" (March 24, 1700: offered by Ed. Randolph), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 527.

<sup>8</sup> "Board of Trade and Plantations to the King" (March 26, 1701), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 536-537.

<sup>9</sup> "Colonel Jennings, President of the Council of Virginia to Lords of Trade" (November 2, 1708), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 692.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Moore, *History of North Carolina*, (Raleigh, N.C.: Alfred Williams and Co., 1880) p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> *CRNC*, vol. 13, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel A. Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1908), vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>13</sup> "Henderson Walker, Deputy Governor of North Carolina to the Governor of Virginia" (October 10, 1699), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 514.

<sup>14</sup> "Henderson Walker to the Governor of Virginia" (November 18, 1699), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 517.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934-1938), vol. 3, p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of North Carolina from the Earliest Period*, 2 vols. (New Orleans, La.: n.p., 1829), vol. 1, p. 145. George Chalmers, *Political Annals of the Province of Carolina*, in *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, ed Bartholomew Rivers Carroll (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1836), vol. 2, p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E.J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2, pp. 148, 151, 335.

<sup>18</sup> John Spencer Bassett, *Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 14, nos. 4-5 (Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 116. Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1956), vol. 1, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> Richard L. Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), vol. 2, p. 427.

<sup>21</sup> William Waller Henning, ed., *The Statutes at Large of Virginia*, vol. 1 (New York: n.p., 1823), pp. 256-57. H.D.W. Connor, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), vol. 1, pp. 30-31. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> "Walker to Governor of Virginia" (October 10, 1699), p. 514.

<sup>23</sup> "Walker to Governor of Virginia" (November 18, 1699), p. 517.

<sup>24</sup> "Walker to Governor of Virginia" (October 10, 1699), p. 514.

<sup>25</sup> "Walker to Governor of Virginia" (November 18, 1699), p. 517.



<sup>26</sup> "Representation to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina concerning the Rebellion in that Country, to be Made Use of in Further Examinations: (1679)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 260–61.

<sup>27</sup> Bartholomew Fowler, Attorney General of Virginia, "Copy of a Letter to ye Deputy Governor of North Carolina" (August 27, 1699), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 513.

<sup>28</sup> "Francis Nicholson, Governor of Virginia, to Henderson Walker, Deputy Governor of North Carolina" (September 8, 1699), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 515.

<sup>29</sup> "Council of Virginia" (October 19, 1708), *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 690–91.

<sup>30</sup> "Col. Seymour to the Lords of Trade" (June 10, 1707); "Col. Seymour to the Lords of Trade" (August 16, 1707); "To the Queen's most Excellt Maiesty" (November 12, 1707: from the Board of Trade and Plantations); "Col. Seymour to the Lords of Trade" (June 23, 1708); all in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 665, 666–67, 672–73, 682–83.

<sup>31</sup> "At a Councill Held at the Capitoll the 24th Day of October 1710," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 748. See also "A Journal of the Proceedings of Phillip Ludwell and Nathaniel Harrison Commissioners Appointed for Settling the Boundaries Between Her Majesty's Colony and Dominion of Virginia and the Province of Carolina" (1710), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 746.

<sup>32</sup> "An Answer to Certine Demands and Proposealls Made by Several Gentlemen and Persons of Good Quality in the Island of Barbados to the Lord Proprietors of the Province of Carolina; We Say" (1663: from the Lords Proprietors), *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 58–59.

<sup>33</sup> R. F. (pseud.), *The Present State of Carolina with Advice to the Settlers* (London: n.p., 1682), pp. 6–7, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Clark, ed., *State Records of North Carolina*, 16 vols. (Goldsboro, Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1895–1905), vol. 23, p. 106.

## Chapter 5

### An Enterprising People: African Americans of the Roanoke Community

The Roanoke community was a deviant from the American social norm in race relations in respect to African Americans as well as Native Americans. There was no hindrance which prevented the Black people from playing an active part in the life of the general community. There were prominent individuals, as well as larger numbers of African Americans who contributed significantly to the political defense of the old settler way of life. Such participation and activity are even more striking in view of the still small number of Black people anywhere in North America. Characteristic of the Roanoke culture was a closeness of social relationships between Black people and whites, as well as between Black people and Native Americans. Out of Roanoke's bias against servitude there emerged a remarkably early militant Abolitionist movement.

In the general social history of Roanoke the African American presence has been evident from the beginning. The first settlers who remained on the land that became North Carolina were African Americans, in sixteenth century settlements, one at the south of the region, the other in the north, accompanied by native South Americans. For all we know their descendants may have survived to merge into later communities. When Roanoke itself first dimly appears in the 1650s, there are Black people among the immigrants to the Tuscarora Empire, one of them a prominent personage, probably a merchant. These were likely Spanish-speaking, but it would be incredible if there were not African Americans, in proportion to their numbers in Virginia, among the fugitives who founded Roanoke proper. The



motives to escape were even more burning for chattel slaves than for indentured servants.

The records clearly show that there were African Americans among the fugitives who augmented the Roanoke population after 1665. Sometimes the more general terms fugitives or servants are used, and sometimes slaves or "Negros" are specified as among the refugees in Roanoke. As early as 1679 Black fugitives are mentioned, along with the expectation of more to come. Among the runaways inquired after by the Governor of Virginia in the fall of 1699, a third or more were African American fugitives.

The inrush of African Americans to North Carolina at the time of the overthrow of old settler domination, necessitating a special law by the new regime, is evidence that the word had spread widely: North Carolina is a good place for colored. To what degree active succor was ~~extended to Black and other fugitives~~ is unknown and immaterial. All that was required was passive sympathy. The government, unless severely prodded from without, was not zealous in its search for fugitives, so long as the old settlers ruled. 'Most important to the Black immigrant before 1714, he or she now lived in a colony where a plantation system did not dominate the fears and prejudices of most inhabitants.

Personal and social relations between the races were different from those of other colonies and later times. At the end of the seventeenth century African Americans attended predominantly white social events. The specific report is of Quaker meetings, the only functioning church in the Colony. Today the church in most of its denominations is often called the most segregated social institution in the United States. In seventeenth century Roanoke the white majority of the only existing church received Black persons into formal membership and chose some to the office of missionary; what is more, Black people wanted to enter into this fellowship, no mere formality but a rigorous process of conversion, and were willing, to labor for such a church in their volunteer office.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon must be taken as a function of Roanoke culture, not of Quakerism in general. For in other times Quakers did not welcome Black members into their Meetings, while African Americans built up their own churches as citadels in the midst of racist America.

The touchstone for determining the absence of white racism is a permissive attitude towards marriage between persons of different races. The substantive issue is unimportant when compared to equal economic and political opportunity, but so hotly has it been felt that a community that is open to interracial marriages is most unlikely to discriminate in other relations between the races. In Roanoke there was

no law against marriage between whites and African Americans until after the overthrow of the old settler regime and society, in 1715. Even then the old permissive attitude often prevailed. The anti-miscegenation law itself did not deny the legality of such marriages, but levied the then very high fine of £50 upon the couple. This curious approach may be best explained as permitting the affluent and influential of the Colony to cross the race line legally in return for a generous contribution to the commonwealth. In 1726 a Reverend John Blacknall of the Church of England in Chowan County married a well-to-do white Currituck man to an African American bride, then informed, and pocketed the informer's half of the fine. Rather than the pastor's being the monster of iniquity which has astonished some, it is more likely that the finesse was by rearrangement: The minister got an exceptional fee; the state got half its fine; the bride and groom obtained a minister's services and a henceforth legal marriage. As late as 1771 John Oggs, a planter of North Carolina, left his estate to those he considered his legal heirs, "my gairl Aeley, my boy Jesse, my gairl Prudence and my boy Charles," children of Hester Oggs, an African American whom he considered his wife. But by now the normalized government and plantation society of North Carolina declared the children and mother to be slaves, the marriage invalid. There may be a hint of Oggs family rootage in the old Roanoke society not only in his spelling or dialect but also in the name of one portion of his estate, Indian Island.

During the period immediately after the overthrow of the Roanoke regime and social order, when the fine system was in effect to regulate marriages between the races, the only North Carolinians to suffer from the law were the new middle class, yeomen farmers in the west. The rich could pay and the poor were not molested for their marital choices. Most of the marriages contracted between whites and African Americans were among the very poor, the dispossessed descendants of the old Roanoke subsistence farmers; these marriages were ignored by the authorities. One evidence that marriages between Black and white continued after the anti-miscegenation law of 1715 is the statement to that effect in the law of 1723 against colored immigration.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of the continuing marriage between the races for this study is its demonstration of how strong was the influence of the old Roanoke culture, decades, even generations after the overthrow of the regime. North Carolina's historian of slavery is undoubtedly correct when he asserts that the frequency of marriages between African Americans and Poor Whites in later times was the result of the general standards of the society that had existed before 1715.<sup>3</sup> The history of race relations in Roanoke should be borne in mind when considering the European ancestry in the African American community. The rape of



enslaved Black women by white men stands among the most terrible expressions of racism and slavery, but there is another source of European ancestry. Men and women who were equals and loved one another married and brought forth children in isolated communities or ignored subcultures, especially in the seventeenth century and on the frontier. Even when race relations became normalized, deviant couples, perhaps such as John and Hannah Oggs, may have harked back privately in their family heritage to the earlier social order.

As with the forbidding of marriage between the races, so also with the sanctioning of slavery, there was no law in North Carolina, so far as is known, until 1715,<sup>4</sup> immediately following the ouster of the old settlers from rule. The colonies were generally late in legislating this institution well established in practice, but not this late. There were few slaves under the Roanoke regime and social order in North Carolina, and those few appear largely to have been concentrated in the hands of the small number of conventional planters whose estates were scattered sparsely among the population of subsistence farmers. North Carolina eventually became a plantation slavery colony and state, but not until the mid-eighteenth century, when the younger sons of Virginia planters brought large numbers of slaves into Albemarle, and other newcomers, many South Carolinians, filled up the previously unoccupied southern part of the colony with slavery plantations. The specialist in the history of North Carolina slavery makes a Cryptic statement concerning the Proprietary era: "The colony was during this period increasing in population very slowly, and it was not till the end of the Tuscarora War, 1712, that the introduction of slaves may be considered as unimpeded."<sup>5</sup> Unimpeded? By what or whom? Either Professor Bassett was referring to some problem beyond our ken, or else, quite probably, he was alluding to the impediments of public opinion and the political regime at Albemarle. Though slavery increased greatly after the overthrow of the old Roanoke community, North Carolina never did become a full-fledged slavery state as did Virginia and South Carolina. Among likely major causes were the continuing if ameliorated problem of transporting cash crops, and the late eighteenth century immigration of small farmers from the north into the central portion of the Colony. But surely another reason was the delay in establishing slavery as other colonies moved forward to the classic fullness of that institution. This was an unknown debt which anti-slavery whites and the Black people of North Carolina owed in later times to the values and political power of the old settlers of Roanoke.

Understandably the Roanoke society produced an abolitionist movement. What is striking was its militancy, more akin to the Garrisonian abolitionism of a century and a half later than the genteel

and conservative anti-slavery sentiment of the late eighteenth century. The leaders in the early years of Roanoke were the Quaker missionary William Edmundson, at the end of the Roanoke regime the Baptists Paul and Joanna Palmer and their associate, the African named Cush Quashey.

Edmundson was the first Quaker missionary to Roanoke, in 1672 conducting the first silent meeting in that community and accompanying the father of Quakerism, George Fox, in his journeys through that land. Edmundson returned for a second ministry to the Colony in 1676 or 1677, when, with the memory of Fox's charisma and the help of the Old Governor, Captain Batts, he worked towards the organization of Quaker congregations. Between the two periods of his mission in Roanoke, in 1675, he wrote an epistle to the Quakers of the Southern Colonies, denouncing slavery:

Christ's command is to do to others as we would have them do to us; and which of you all would have the blacks, or others, to make you their slaves without hope or expectation of freedom? Would not this be an aggravation upon your minds that would outbalance all other comforts? So make their condition your own; for a good conscience void of offence is of more worth than all the world, and Truth must regulate all wrongs and wrong dealings.

As an epistle, directed to Friends' meetings, Friends convinced but not yet gathered, and seekers after truth not yet convinced, emanating from the missionary to the South, this was more than a personal witness. It was an organizational document. The epistle on slavery is the first known statement against slavery issued in America. It antedates by thirteen years the verbal witness of the Germantown, Pennsylvania, Friends Meeting<sup>6</sup> (of German sectarian origin), which is usually cited as the earliest anti-slavery statement. There was not to be a consensus against slaveholding in the Society of Friends as a whole for another century. As a manifesto written in the South to Southerners, Edmundson's epistle takes on greater significance, and probably exerted a greater contemporary impact. One may well imagine the consternation of slaveholders already concerned over the escape of slaves to North Carolina.

In Roanoke itself, following the receipt of the epistle and a year to ponder and debate the message, Edmundson's return was warmly greeted by large gatherings of settlers, and seekers became convinced Quakers in sufficient numbers to organize three congregations in the small



churchless Colony during the next four or five years.<sup>7</sup> Thus this founding of the Society of Friends in North Carolina, besides its primary religious meaning, was a witness in support of radical anti-slavery testimony. The new Friends joined in esteem for their leader, Edmundson, if any did not endorse his teaching. For an understanding of the attitude towards slavery of the Roanoke community as a whole it is more important to note that the new Quakers had been simply persons among the generality of unchurched settlers, and that the majority came to admire their old friends as newborn Friends and to select them as the political spokesmen of the community.

In 1720, six years after the final overthrow of the Roanoke community and its political power, and perhaps in reaction to the new rule of those who sought to transform North Carolina into a conventional Southern colony, the Baptist Palmers, Cush Quashey and their supporters made their dangerous witness against slavery. The daring plan was formulated at the home of the Palmers: the initial phase was executed by Quashey, called the slave of the Palmers but obviously their confrere and collaborator. He rode, leading a second horse, across the treacherous terrain to the plantation of one Nicholas Crisp. There he surreptitiously made his presence known to an enslaved fellow Black named Sambo; when the moment of opportunity came, the two mounted the horses and disappeared into the wild. They made their way across Chowan County, then across Perquimans County to the Palmer home. It was a hurried and clandestine journey through these swamp lands, one that required hidden boats and other horses tended by accomplices, or extraordinary swampland horsemanship on the part of Cush Quashey. Paul and Joanna Palmer awaited them, took them in, and attended to their needs.

This raid meant something more to the countryside than the escape of a single slave. For the news was "to the great terror of many of the Kings subjects." The search for the escaped slave and his rescuers by slaveholder Crisp and his posse was successful. Two weeks after the raid a warrant was issued by the Chief Justice of North Carolina, and in the absence of Paul Palmer, the Constable of the Colony and deputies seized both Quashey and Sambo at the Palmer place. The authorities held the fugitive and the chief malefactor in the vicinity; they erred in not reckoning upon the nearby presence of Mistress Palmer. After perhaps vainly trying to reach her husband or other supporters, Joanna herself appeared before the place of confinement, levelled a gun at the Constable and his force, and held them at bay while Sambo and Cush Quashey made their final escape, disappearing from the knowledge of the authorities and from ours. It is likely they made their way into the Great Dismal Swamp, as the nearest large natural sanctuary in a

direction away from the seats of authority. Already in that refuge fugitives from the Roanoke community and the Tuscarora Empire, overthrown a few years before, were establishing themselves as maroons. ✓

The trial of Paul and Joanna Palmer lasted fifteen months, with five recesses. It was held in the Colony's General Court of Oyer and Terminer. That the aggrieved slaveholder Nicholas Crisp was a prominent leader of the new regime in North Carolina is shown by his description as "a true and faithfull Servt of our Sovereign Lord the King" and his office as Foreman of the Grand Jury of the Court. It was necessary for Crisp to resign that post in order to participate as plaintiff in this criminal trial. But the remainder of the jurymen remained the same, his old acquaintances and subordinates.

During the trial the Palmers repeatedly protested the proceedings by refusal to cooperate with the court, and consequently suffered lengthy imprisonment. On principle Paul refused to offer bond, though financially capable, remaining jailed for at least three and perhaps as many as six months. Joanna refused to heed her summons when court reconvened, and was brought in forcibly by the constables. When the time came, husband and wife together refused to plead, and both were jailed for another four months. That the Palmers and Quashey were not alone in their struggle is shown by the fact that when the couple at last consented to plead not guilty, friends came forward and placed their farms in the hands of the court as bail, to the amount of some £900.

✓ The three abolitionists (Quashey *in absentia*) escaped sentencing by the refusal of the Attorney General to serve, and his flight for reasons unreported, which occasioned the dropping of all cases on the docket that season. Another event more likely to be related to the anti-slavery struggle, though there is no proof, was the murder of a John Palmer during the period of the trial, and the acquittal of the accused.

The Palmers' first cause for fame in 1720, suppressed in later times, was followed at the end of that decade by a second cause for fame that became enshrined in American church history. Paul Palmer as first minister, with Joanna Palmer as first minister's wife, was founder of the Baptist churches of North Carolina, which became one of the most Baptist of States. He was born in Maryland, baptized in Delaware, ordained in Connecticut, and had ministered in New Jersey and Maryland before he and Joanna settled in North Carolina. His earlier call in this Colony was to the prophetic office of proclaiming liberty throughout the land rather than the preaching ministry, for there can be little doubt in light of his earlier and later careers that the motivation of Paul's and Joanna's audacity and suffering in 1720 and 1721 was religious. Taking up the task of missionaries they organized a short-lived Chowan Baptist



Church in 1727. But the monument to the work of the beloved couple is Shiloh Baptist Church, organized in 1729 in Pasquotank County and now in Camden County, the Mother Church of all the Baptists of North Carolina, whether of the Southern Baptist, National Baptist (African American) or other conventions.

Southern white Baptists, understandably before 1965, have not chosen to admit the abolitionist stand of their North Carolina founders. Instead they followed the course of presenting the 1720 charges against the Palmers as an indictment for simple robbery, a charge so ridiculous against the pious couple that these church historians could easily dismiss it as a grudge prosecution. In the indictment the Palmers and Cush Quashey were indeed charged with the theft of other property besides the body of Sambo: a rug, a coat, shirt, new leather britches, stockings, new shoes, and a hat. Baptist historians have held up these petty articles of alleged theft to dramatize the absurdity of the charges. They were in fact of course the clothes that Sambo was wearing at tie time of his rescue, and his personal bedding. There is no hint in the histories that slavery or the opposition to slavery was involved, or that the charges held any implication save petty larceny, and slave stealing for resale.

Yet the sources clearly reveal that slavery was the issue. The time was too early for religious bigotry against Baptists. The Palmers, though they had been Baptists before migrating to North Carolina, had not yet launched serious missionary efforts in this colony; the unsuccessful attempt to organize a Baptist church at Chowan was still seven years in the future. The lengths to which the Palmers went in their contempt of court and suffering of imprisonment are acts of witness for a high cause, not defenses against a grudge prosecution. And the court itself declared that the countryside had been turmoiled, a panic or alleged panic hardly to be associated with one more case of larceny, grand and petty. By the hasty sweeping aside of the historic meaning of the case, the early history of the Southern church has been circumscribed, and later generations of Baptists have been insulated from knowledge of their heritage.

The churches founded by the Palmers were influenced by the cultural values of the old Roanoke community, which had been overthrown only fifteen years before the founding of Shiloh. For these churches were similar to the quaker religion of the old settlers in their avoidance of orthodoxy and their sensitivity to free consciences. Besides the usual Baptist witnesses for separation of state and church, and the voluntary principle of believer's baptism rather than the christening of unthinking infants, these churches upheld individual freedom of belief within the church, like latter-day Unitarians, including the right to

doubt the Trinity or the Divinity of Christ.<sup>8</sup> These attitudes, when added to the members' conversion through the preaching of a most militant abolitionist, demonstrate the influence of the culture that had been dominant in the Colony a generation before. For a while the mantle of quakers and Quakers passed to the Baptists of North Carolina.

It was only in the latter half of the eighteenth century that the Baptist churches began their progress into orthodoxy and Calvinism, and turned their backs so completely upon their founders that they forgot, or suppressed, the meaning of their witness.

Though submerged, the earliest heritage did not utterly die. It lived on through the descendants of William Burgess (or Burges), the first minister of Shiloh Mother Church as the Palmers went on to spread the word throughout the Colony. Shiloh came to be called Burgess's Meeting House; the family was honored for its ancestry but subordinated by the changes in the church. They bided their time for a century; then, during the Civil War the Burgess clan reasserted its heritage by practically the identical witness made by the Palmers and Quashey, but on a wider scale; and, as we shall see, they physically liberated their Church from its usurpers, in conjunction with their cousins, the maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp.<sup>9</sup>

Now that the social psychology of the South has been so swiftly transformed, Southern Baptists will likely regain Paul and Joanna Palmer as exemplary saints. The Baptists, and especially the multitude of African American Baptists, may reasonably include Cush Quashey along with the Palmers in their newfound heritage. So close were these three in confidential planning and heroic action that Quashey may well have received baptism at the hands of the minister; we know that Cush must have been deeply touched by the faith of Paul and Joanna, as they were by his faith.

Quashey's activities were a part of the aftermath of the Roanoke community, the first years of the new regime that had overthrown that society. A generation earlier, during the late seventeenth century, the most secure period for the Roanoke social order and old settler domination of North Carolina, African Americans played an exceptionally active part in the life of the community despite their relatively few numbers, judging from the appearance of four notable persons *identified* as Black in the scanty records of the Colony. Their notability was such as to indicate that they were well known in the general community of Roanoke as well as to the officers of government who recorded the information. They all demonstrated qualities, of enterprise, boldness, professional skill, business sense or political leadership, that might well have earned them the admiration of many fellow settlers. Their activities were all recorded during the decade of the



1690s. These notables were Craven the far-travelled, Thomas Andover the pilot, Francis Johnson the salvage operator, and Mannuell the plantation commander.

Our knowledge of the first of these is from a passing reference, not the legal documents which provide fuller information on the others, and his name is not mentioned. He is called Craven in this study, as a name that would have been appropriate and useful to him in his dealings with the North Carolina authorities; he had been a member of the household of the English Earl of Craven, and looked upon that nobleman as his benefactor. Craven of Roanoke was an unusually far-travelled American for the seventeenth century, especially in isolated North Carolina. had been a slave, but made his first ocean voyage to England, where it seems he resided for some years. There he took service with the Earl of Craven, one of the original Proprietors of Carolina, a friend and benefactor of monarchs in their times of trouble, of the exiled Queen of and a patron of the sciences and literature. The old Earl, in his eighties or nineties when Craven of Roanoke knew him, emancipated his young servant, which could be taken in that enormous household of mostly free servants to suggest a personal rapport between the English lord and the African American servant. Around the time of his benefactor's death, Craven of Roanoke made his second voyage, to New England. Craven's last journey, of which we know, was south by sloop along the stormy Atlantic coast to Roanoke, upon an errand which would seem to have been urgent and certainly entailed a risky voyage. In Roanoke a claim was made that Craven was an escaped slave, and the authorities made inquiries to contact his supposed owner.<sup>10</sup> The outcome is not known; it may be hoped that Craven was able to establish his free status by testimony from the new Earl in England, to continue his enterprising life. Surely the adventurous career of this man was a matter of interest and discussion among the settlers of Roanoke.

Thomas Andover was a successful pilot, a profession conspicuous in Africa along the rivers and coastal waterways and among Black people in America during the next two centuries. The waterways of Roanoke were one of the greatest challenges in North America to the skill and training of a pilot. Even residents did not readily trust themselves to the countless creeks and runs which branched off from the rivers of Albemarle Sound, the interruption of swamps, changeable according to the weather, the shifting sand bars of the Sound, or the treacherous outer Banks. They preferred to hire a professional pilot, of which Master Thomas Andover was the most prominent. He was as successful in business as in the exercise of his profession, to the point that he became creditor to one of the women of greatest prestige, and, on paper, the wealthiest woman of the Colony. She was Anna Sothell,

widow of Governor Seth Sothell, one of North Carolina's later Proprietors. Widow Sothell was land poor. She had inherited the largest estates of the Colony, 44,000 acres in three great plantations and two lesser ones. But land without a labor supply or market does not put meat on the table. It was to Pilot Andover that the aged lady turned for a loan on which to live during her last years. As was the wont in Roanoke, the financial transactions were not in money but in kind, in this case, cattle and swine, for breeding as well as the table. It was well that businessman Thomas Andover held on to her "Bill of Debt," since upon her death the estate was contested, and the executors refused to honor his claim. Whereupon Andover went to court, and after the usual prolonged proceedings, at last obtained repayment of the loan and the accumulated interest.<sup>11</sup>

Another Black business and professional man of seventeenth century Roanoke was Francis Johnson. He was a salvager of the cargoes of wrecked ships, or, as the profession was less politely called, a wrecker. The harborless coast of North Carolina, the Outer Banks and the storms of the region lent importance to his business of wrecking or salvage in the economy of Roanoke. There was nothing illegal or otherwise sinister about the occupation, so long as the wreckers did not help the storm along, by disabling a ship not yet wrecked, or driving off a crew not yet prepared to abandon ship. Charges of this illegal form of salvage work, verging on piracy, were made against Roanoke by the opponents of proprietary charters, such as the report in 1700 that salvagers had wrecked a ship beached but not damaged by storm, and had used cannon to drive off the crew.

Francis Johnson's operations were legal from the viewpoint of the North Carolina courts. In 1696 he engaged with partners in an unusually large and lucrative salvage job, which ended in litigation. After the agent appointed had disposed of the goods, Johnson's erstwhile partners refused him his share of the profit. So he sued them. The outcome is not given, but if *the* case failed, it was not for lack of enterprise on the part of Johnson. To two different hearings he summoned witnesses from afar, who spent twenty-five days under subpoena cooling their heels awaiting the trial. They in turn sued Master Johnson for £100 damages, to pay their board and lodging during the wait. The financial stakes were not small in this case. It was probably the same Francis Johnson who around 1704 sold a 190 acre farm, in those times of land surplus less a sign of the seller's neediness than of his shrewdness as a real estate operator.<sup>12</sup>

The careers of Thomas Andover and Francis Johnson cast light upon the place of African Americans in the Roanoke community in respect to business, finance and law. Both were successful enough



business men in their professions to require the use of the law. Neither hesitated to use the courts with an especial boldness, the one to sue the greatest estate of the Colony, the other to hold witnesses away from their homes for almost a month. In the social order of Roanoke African Americans could not only appeal to the law for protection, but also use the law for their advancement. It also appears that African Americans made their mark in the economic world of Roanoke, not only in the successful operation of their professions, but also in the accumulation of considerable wealth in terms of the impoverished Roanoke society. Two cases are not enough to answer such a broad question but they do raise it: Was business acumen represented in Roanoke by the African commercial heritage, in the midst of a largely non-Acquisitive and non-mercantile settler population of British peasant origin?

The professions followed by Andover and Johnson, pilot and salvage operator, are signs of Roanoke's distinctive physical environment. The career of Captain Mannuell reflects the social environment, a rough, frontier community. The title "Captain" is supplied as descriptive of Mannuell's work. He was a slave in some legal or technical sense only. He was a part of the Seth and Anna Sothell plantations, the entire estate tied up in the most complex litigation, so that Captain Mannuell's owner was known only to God. Officially he was resident agent for the executors upon one of the 14,000 acre plantations, but in practice they had little authority and less knowledge with which to direct or try to direct their representative. Captain Mannuell was the virtual king of the twenty-two square mile territory and the small number of laborers, tenants or squatters who lived there. There was a continuous forcible vying for power between Captain Mannuell supported by his people and the captains and people of the other two great Sothell plantations. Many times it became necessary for the officials of Roanoke to intervene in the struggles among these little principalities to prevent full-scale war. Sometimes an armed force was sent in to police the ambitious and ruthless antagonists.<sup>13</sup> Mannuell's name is reminder of the Afro-Latin presence in the English colonies, whether newcomers from the Latin-American colonies, or, as was possible in North Carolina, descendants of Spanish-speaking residents of the early seventeenth or even sixteenth century. Captain Mannuell's career is reminder that in America as in Africa a slave might be a king, that the African tradition of charismatic leadership and the African American genius for politics and the seizing of opportunity was present in seventeenth century Roanoke.

It would be strange if the names Quashey, Craven, Andover, Johnson and Mannuell are not representative of other Black members of the Roanoke community whose well-known names were not identified

in the sources as those of African Americans, or whose significant activities were not the sort to require mention in the governmental records of the Colony. It is certain that many Black people in Roanoke, though their names are not known, made identifiable contributions to the culture of the community, and rallied to the defense of the old settler regime whenever the social order was threatened.

Though African Americans as members of the community shared in the general development of Roanoke's distinctive culture, they made two special contributions: to the religion, and to the relations with Native Americans. Black people were very active in the Quaker congregations of Roanoke, but here the direction of influence would seem to have been from the European sect to the African Americans. The special contribution of African Americans to the religious development of Roanoke appears to have been the strengthening and molding of the "enthusiasm" characteristic of the quaker religion held by the greater number of old settlers. The Black presence and activity in Roanoke generally and at Quaker meetings in particular, accompanied by the appearance of Pentecostal-like manifestations disapproved by the Quakers, suggest the influence of benign ecstatic possession and the holy dance, African and Native American rather than European cultural phenomena.<sup>14</sup>

For the other special contribution of African Americans to Roanoke culture, there is evidence that Black people played an even larger part than the immigrant community as a whole in the development of peace and understanding with the Native American Nations. The Tuscaroras got on well with the Roanoke settlers in general, but reserved their warmest 'friendship for the Black component of that community. The authority on Tuscarora history has identified this people as the traditional Native American nation most wont to receive and succor African American fugitives from slavery. This judgment speaks as well to the African American attitude towards Native Americans in North Carolina, for such a relationship is by nature reciprocal. In the bloody climax of this history, narrated in the following chapter, African Americans in considerable numbers fought beside the Native Americans in their greatest defensive battle of the Tuscarora War, and new modes of warfare were brought to the service of the embattled Tuscarora by an African American, Harry the engineer, who must be placed among the other Black notables of early North Carolina whose names are preserved.<sup>15</sup>

This affinity between African Americans and Native Americans was not the product of cultural similarities; Native North American and African cultures were very different, perhaps as different as each was from European traditional peasant culture. Native Americans were



agriculturalists but also people of earth's natural terrain; the West African heritage of Black Americans was highly commercial, often urban, and elaborately political. Perhaps what did bind the two peoples so closely together was unqualified trust in one another's opposition towards European colonizers. White fugitives made good brothers too, but every one required testing. Whatever the cause of the bond between Black and Native Americans, it provided the former with a special opportunity. Distinct from the two larger populations of North Carolina, the white and Native American, yet at ease with both, African Americans could mediate understanding, between Tuscaroras and European old settlers of Roanoke, enhancing the peace and cultural interchange towards which undoubtedly the major parties also directly contributed.

Besides participating in the development of a unique culture, African Americans were active in the major political events of the Colony's history. That they maintained an informed interest in politics over the years and participated in the formulation of public policy is evidenced by significant Black activity in every known major political crisis which the Colony experienced. There can be little mystery about their motive for political involvement. As escaped slaves, the children of fugitives, "free Blacks" whose status in other colonies was probably declining as slavery grew, or even slaves whose bondage was not likely to be as severe as elsewhere in the social milieu of North Carolina, African Americans of Roanoke did not wish to see their community transformed into a conventional colony. In the South, between Virginia and South Carolina, this would mean a colony dominated by a plantation slavery society. It was to the interest of Black people to defend the old distinctive social order and culture of Roanoke against those who would modernize and regularize, by joining subsistence farmers of indentured servant origin and Native Americans in support of the old settler political regime.

The political crises through 1714 of the Colony in general will be discussed later; here they will be mentioned only to show the presence of significant Black activity in defense of the old regime.

The first crisis, in 1677, was the ousting of officials, the charge that Albemarle was in rebellion, and resolution by the Proprietors' support of the old settlers, not the ousted officials. Only twelve years after the official establishment of the Colony, sources from the American side of the Atlantic are fewer than in later decades, and the glimpse of a special Black involvement is dim. It is reported that new fugitives, including African Americans, had joined the "rebels," that is, the Roanoke settlers who were forcibly defending their self-

determination.<sup>16</sup> That Black people did play a notable part in later crises lends credence to this allegation.

The second crisis, beginning in 1708, was a *coup d'etat* followed by a war of English and colonial forces to overthrow the old settler regime. For this there is a report so specific in detail that there is no good reason to doubt it: African Americans escaped from Virginia constituted the navy of Roanoke which sought to drive off their enemies from the shores of Albemarle Sound.<sup>17</sup>

The third and final crisis in the political history of Roanoke was the Tuscarora War, ending in 1714, which sealed the fate of the old settler political power and social order. As noted already, the Black people furnished troops and engineering techniques for this last defense of the Native American and old settler ways of life.

Four years after the conclusion of the Tuscarora War and the crushing of the old North Carolina, African Americans led in two portentous events which shook the new regime. Curiously, they occurred at the same time, in October and November of 1718.

The lesser, or less understandable, of the events was reported in a letter to the Council of North Carolina at Albemarle from the Secretary of the Colony, then at Bath, a new settlement to the south. He reported that a great body of "Indians" had surrounded the town and seized the son and daughter of a planter, as well as their white servant and their slave. The Colony was thrown into an uproar so soon after the bloody Tuscarora War, but the Council refrained from action and a week later they received a retraction from the Secretary. The white servant had informed: The dire news was a lie, concocted by the four who had pretended to be captured. The servant and planter's son were flogged, the daughter fined, and the planter required to post high bond for their future good behavior. The slave Pompey, who had escaped, was outlawed—to be killed on sight or executed upon capture. The Council did not claim to understand the motive for the conspiracy, but believed that the children might have been protecting the slave from punishment for similar "rogueries" he had committed in the past. "Roguery" in those times did not mean amusing minor mischief, but surreptitious crimes and antisocial behavior characteristic of vagabonds and outlaws. The motive advanced, like the entire affair, is most cryptic.

There is information in the Council report which suggests serious but unfathomable meaning behind the event. Pompey had engaged in similar (!) activities before. He is referred to as a Negro before his escape, an Indian after. Another person, called "Indian Johnny," rendered unspecified services to the colonial government. The Council sent word of the affair to the king of Indians who had not fought in the recent war and remained in the Colony, together with a reprimand for not keeping



the government informed of events in general. And it was thought best to keep the Rangers, an emergency force, mobilized in the vicinity of Bath.<sup>18</sup> The pieces cannot be reassembled, but it is clear there were ramifications beyond the single plantation. Pompey appears to have been an agitator with connections rather than a person suddenly aroused by personal anger. At the least he caused renewed demoralization in the Colony at the time when the new regime was still consolidating its power. It may also have been a feint, the panic coordinated with other plans that did not eventuate.

The other crisis in North Carolina which occurred at the very same time and was also Black-led was the last battle of Blackbeard the pirate. It too is a part of African American history, inasmuch as Blackbeard's crew were Black. The outlaws of the sea, who plundered the commerce of all nations, had operated for years along the desolate coast between Charleston and Chesapeake Bay as well as in the Caribbean, preying upon the coastal shipping of the Southern plantation colonies. Since 1685 the pirate base had been the Bahamas, but in 1716 a new political regime was installed there which hunted and hanged them, and the pirates transferred their land base to the sparsely populated coast of North Carolina.

Blackbeard, the most famous pirate of that century, was also called Edward Thatch, a name which after his time and until recently has been rendered Teach, apparently a copyist's error. His fleet was six ships, with forty guns and a hundred men. Under his command sailed a former army major, Steed Bonnett, who achieved fame as a pirate in his own right. Bonnett was familiar with the devious and little explored coast of North Carolina, and he and his superior established their small fleet at Ocracoke Inlet, an entrance to both Albemarle Sound and Pamlico Sound to the south. The pirates also frequented the desolate Atlantic shore of Princess Anne County in Virginia, only the beach separating them from the northern stretches of the Great Dismal Swamp. Sometimes they dared to enter Chesapeake Bay in search of the rich spoils of Virginia and Maryland. Regularly they swept Albemarle Sound, and the Pasquotank River in the heart of Roanoke was one of their haunts. It is not suggested that there had been any alliance between the pirates and the Roanoke community, despite affinities of origin, but it is probably true there was no enmity. Subsistence farmers were not the prey of pirates, and it had been the pirates' wise strategy back in the Bahamas to keep on good terms with those who lived at their land base.

Now the West Indies suffered less from the raids, the mainland more, and the cry went up from merchants and planters bemoaning their losses. South Carolinians destroyed many of the pirates. Then Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia, chief engineer for the overthrow of

the Roanoke community and the Tuscarora Confederacy, ended this third menace to the Southern plantation colonies by destruction of their most notorious leader. In the Fall of 1718 he ordered a naval expedition to Ocracoke to search out Blackbeard's lair and destroy his forces. The English warship surprised the pirates at their principal base. The engagement was bloody, with bombardments from both side, and finally hand-to-hand fighting on the deck of Blackbeard's flagship. The pirates were defeated, their vow to blow up themselves and their enemy rather than suffer capture frustrated when the Black crewman assigned to the powder keg was flung aside before he could apply the flame. There were twenty-nine English and a larger number of pirate casualties. Among the dead was Blackbeard.

"The survivors of the pirate crew were all found to be negroes" wrote North Carolina's first professional historian, Samuel A'Court Ashe.<sup>19</sup> For the America of 1718 this can only mean escaped slaves: maroons of the sea. The appropriateness of applying the community term maroon to pirates is also supported by the still familiar phrase "Pirate King." Besides their fleets, pirates maintained land settlements, and these were communities, with women and children. For sure they were independent states. The racial composition of one of the most famous pirate bands raises the question as to what extent piracy was a variety of social outlawry, the motive not plunder alone, but to a significant degree social revolt. If it can be shown that many pirate crews were composed of escaped slaves and indentured servants, then at last there is a meaningful framework for a serious history of piracy.

The racial identification of Edward Thatch himself is speculative. One may ponder the phenomenon of a voluntary crew of escaped slaves holding a white man as their captain. Blackbeard's other name, Thatch, was also a nickname; the name give to him in childhood is not known. Thatch is a slang term, meaning a 'bushy' head of hair. Young Thatch and Old Blackbeard: Both names point to a dramatic impact of his hair upon the beholder. If Blackbeard the pirate was indeed a light-skinned man with African hair worn long and thick and natural, then he was endowed with just the resources to relate positively to the predominantly white communities ashore, while he maintained rapport with his brothers of the crew.

Blackbeard's last campaign and the Pompey panic of 1718, the abolitionist agitation of the Palmers and Quashey in 1720, and the colored immigration discouraged by the punitive tax law of 1723, were events following the overthrow of the Roanoke community, yet seemed to assume that the old regime was still operative or about to be restored. These aggressive actions, apparently relying on the old order when it was no more, are an anomaly which deserves comment. The



belated events may be explained by lack of judgment. But there is a concrete fact that may have justified such otherwise unrealistic expectations.

The Lords Proprietors continued to hold the charter of North Carolina another fifteen years after the overthrow of the Roanoke community, from 1714 to 1729. They knew the game was up, but adherents of the old society within the Colony could not gauge the attitude, intentions, will or remaining power of the Proprietors. For all these knew the Proprietors might still be the ultimate protectors of the old settlers, a resource for the restoration of their regime.

Blow after blow shattered the Proprietors' concept of themselves as sovereigns over North Carolina: a new regime in the colonial assembly brought to power by the opponents of proprietary charters; the forceful overthrow of the Proprietors' allies, the settler regime, their dispersal and proscription from future political action; the destruction of the Tuscarora Confederacy, friend of old settlers and Proprietors; a permanent majority in the British parliament committed to the revocation of proprietary charters; the Proprietors' loss of their charter for the Bahamas in 1718, and for South Carolina in 1719. In those last years of the Proprietary Colony the Charter was no longer a warrant for rule, but a parchment sealed by a dead king whose only worth now was its sales value. How much financial recompense they might obtain when the charter was at last legally revoked was the concern in the final years of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina.

Blackbeard and Pompey, the abolitionists and the colored immigrants were not privy to the thoughts of the Proprietors; it was not then so unreasonable for them, when they took action, to think: I'll make my move; the Lord Proprietors will fix things up. The Lords Proprietors had indeed in bygone time. But never again would they lend support to unorthodox social values, connive at the circumvention of imperial policy, recall an unpopular governor or lend official support to settlers-in-arms who had forcibly overthrown a regime deemed despotic.<sup>20</sup>

For over forty years, in each crisis of the Roanoke community, the Black presence was reported in defense of the old settler way of life, and as each succeeding crisis grew sharper, the Black presence grew larger: From a dim report at first, to vital services in the second and third crisis, to a major share of leadership in the two crises and the abolitionist and immigrationist movements which soon followed the overthrow of Roanoke and may be considered the last stands of a lost cause. This striking intensification of Black political and military action may reflect nothing more than a small gradual gain in population. But it also points to the possibility, reasonable enough in

view of what was gained, then lost at Roanoke, that African Americans were the most resolute, consistent and persevering defenders of Roanoke and the social values for which that government stood.

The social histories of the Colony of North Carolina and the Colony of the Bahamas in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are remarkably parallel, especially in the realm of race relations. Blackbeard is the historic personal link between North Carolina and the Bahamas. Because a new regime in the latter colony forcibly ejected the pirates who had harbored there, the pirates sought for their new land base the colony most similar to the Bahamas geographically and socially, which was North Carolina as she had been up to 1714. Constitutionally the Bahamas were East Carolina, or the Carolinas were the West Bahamas. The three colonies were ruled by the same Lords Proprietors; the islands had been an addition to the Carolina grant, bestowed in 1668.<sup>21</sup> But the reason for a glance at Bahamian history is the light cast by the comparison of similar colonies.

Spain had never colonized the Bahamas. Eight years after Columbus's discovery of America Spain began the systematic hunting and enslavement of the Lucayan Nation of Native American, who dwelled on these islands to the number of 20,000 souls. By 1520 the genocide was completed; the islands were empty of people and the remnants of the nation were dying in Spanish mines and plantations. The Spaniards did not settle on this land. Like North Carolina, the coasts were too difficult and dangerous to sustain profitable commerce and communications between ruled and rulers.<sup>22</sup> The treacherous reefs and shoals, the dangerous channels and the devastating storms of the Bahama Islands and the Outer Banks of North Carolina produced the same historical effects; they were a major reason for the parallel development of the two colonies.

Settlements by Africans were among the first in the Bahamas as in North Carolina. Within the 760 mile long maze of almost 700 islands and over 2000 islets was the American land base for the fighting fleets of North Africa, as well as those of French and British raiders. The Moors were among the earliest of the old world competitors of Spain whose corsairs harassed the Spanish shipping of the Western Hemisphere, seizing stray ships or cutting them out under the very guns of the armada. Few Spanish ships reached Europe without a chase by corsairs. The African Muslims received several rewards for their bold and dangerous efforts: a share of Spain's New World wealth; the continuation of the ancient war between Moorish and Christian kingdoms in Spain (the last Moorish Kingdom in Spain had only fallen in 1492); and the proud placing of the Islamic faith in the heart of the mightiest Christian empire. Vestiges of the Islamic settlement may



exist in the names of Grand Turk Island and the other Turks Islands at the eastern end of the Bahamas, and Eleuthera Island. *El-Uthra* in Arabic means The Green One. It is reported that the waters upon the approach to Eleuthera have a green color exceptional in the Bahamas. These explanations of the names are as likely as the traditional English guesses that the Turks Islands were named for a plant which resembled a Turkish fez, and that Puritan financiers first gave the name Eleuthera, a Classical Greek reference to a libertarian utopia. From Puritans one would expect a religious rather than secular name.<sup>23</sup> Unhappily details on sixteenth century African Muslim America can not be known until there is a specialist in the history of the Americas who is able to read Arabic and Turkish.

In the late 1640s the new colonial presence of England was felt; there were attempts to settle some of the Bahama Islands by Englishmen from Bermuda. It was the grant of the Bahamas to the Lords Proprietors twenty years later which provided another cause for the parallel development of the Bahamas and North Carolina, besides the common geographical isolation. The Lords Proprietors were happy indeed when a wealthy plantation slavery colony, South Carolina, developed within their territories. But when geographic and social conditions forbade this, they followed their same policy in the Bahamas as in North Carolina: not to strangle their little birds in hope that fat ones would fly into their hand. They tolerated the local government and social order, and pocketed, in the case of the Bahamas, not the feudal dues of quitrents, but a stipulated share of the profits of wrecking, a major business of the Islands. The results of this self-determination, the failure of plantation slavery to develop in either colony and the harboring of land fugitives in North Carolina and pirates in the Bahamas, aroused the ire of commercial-plantation interests in other colonies and England, the political forces who sought to build a wealthy empire and revoke the proprietary charters.

From sources hostile to the Bahamian political regime and social order which flourished in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it is reported that the inhabitants were fugitives from the West Indian plantation colonies, even the more affluent and would-be respectable. The other and predominant element of the population were African Americans, also esteemed members of the community.

The people that inhabit this Colony are almost all such who for several enormous crimes and villainies have either fled from, or been thrust out of all the other Colonies in America.

Here are two sorts of people, the best sort are of an uneasy and a factious temper, drove out of Jamaica, Barbados, New England and such like places, who neither believe that they ought to be subject to the power of God or the commands of the King . . . The other sort are Malaiters [Mulattos] or halfe negroes, which the better sort value mightily, for their goeing out in sloops and Cruseing (as they call it) to search for wracks, and if they miss finding any there are sure to make one before they return again . . . <sup>24</sup>

The Governor who made this report had the most extreme reasons for personal as well as political bias against the Bahamians, but setting aside the magnitude of the crimes alleged against the general population, it is reasonable that the Bahamas at the time was a refuge for West Indians. The Islands were isolated, socially and politically removed from the plantation system, and virtually independent under the policy of the Proprietors. The long line of the islands, paralleling almost all of the length of the West Indies from west to east, made "island-hopping" by very small craft quite possible, though dangerous. The booming plantation economy of the British West Indies provided progressively less place for poor whites, and was a mounting hell for the Black people of the slave plantations. Moreover we know that one kind of fugitive, the pirates, was an important element in Bahamian society. Besides the fugitive poor there appears to have been a "better sort" according to the Governor, who may be taken as unsuccessful planters of an exceptionally desperate kind, judging from their choice of the Bahamas for resettlement.

The statement that the majority were mulattoes rather than Negroes is an interesting observation. One explanation is that in the Caribbean three-fold caste system of white, colored and Negro; all the African Americans of the Bahamas were promoted to honorary mulattoes because of their essential economic and political role in this frontier community. Another possibility is that they were indeed "mulattoes," that the 439 "slaves" reported in 1671 out of a total population of 1097<sup>25</sup> had frequently married fugitive poor whites, producing thirty years later a largely light-skinned colored population. Perhaps both suppositions are true. As for slavery, whatever the legal fiction, these African Americans who roamed the seas armed were in no real sense chattel slaves like those who labored in the sugar, tobacco and cotton colonies and states of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The ruling political party in the Assembly of the Bahamas was the colored party (mulatto party in the terms of the time), supported by the



"rabble," which surely included some darker as well as the light African Americans, and some poor whites. The program of the party was to defend the social order as it was, to support the Proprietors against royal rule, and to protect those elements who were considered criminal by the outside commercial interests on whom they preyed. After all, piracy was only a step from illegal wrecking, which in turn was but a step from legal wrecking, upon which many of the inhabitants depended for income, as did the Lords Proprietors for their share. The political opposition, the party of "the better sort" must have had some differences of interest from the poor, and they seem to have been the less realistic Bahamians who sought to have their cake and eat it too, that is, to protect the Islands from outside interference yet to look forward somehow to internal normalization as a country of law, order and respect for betters. There is indication that the opposition such as it was joined with the colored party in support of the Proprietors and did not oppose the harboring of pirates except perhaps by grumbling. When a governor chose to oppose the policy and way of life of the Bahamas, virtually the entire population joined to oust him, or the better sort stood aside neutral, as in North Carolina until the final crises.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of the seventeenth century there came a vacancy in the office of Governor, and there was a constitutional mandate to the local government to elect a successor until one appointed by the Proprietors might be sent over. The majority party of the Assembly chose not to support a white sympathizer (or member, if there was any), and instead offered the party head as their selection for the office. There were members of the upper house, the Council, who, as representatives of Proprietors, had some prior claims to the succession, but they stood aside in deference to the public support for the party's choice. Thereupon on April 14, 1699 the Council of the Colony elected the candidate of the Assembly and leader of the colored party, an African American, Colonel Read Elding, as Governor of the Bahamas. He served until the beginning of September, 1701, a little over two years and four months, a term not unusually brief for the more mercurial colonies. Throughout the administration the official relations between the Governor and the Lords Proprietors, even the English Council of Trade and Plantations, were unaffected by his race; the tone of communications was perfectly correct and indeed less querulous than many exchanges between English colonial authorities and their American governors.<sup>27</sup>

Governor Elding's title of Colonel probably indicates that he had been commanding officer of the Bahamian Militia, which, if like North Carolina's in the same period, was the people in arms rather than the structured organization of the plantation or commercial colonies. For


some years before his election as Governor Colonel Elding as leader of the majority party had exercised great political power, deferred to even by governors, reluctant to flout his popularity with the people. Another of Elding's resources were the widespread connections of his family, who united their influence behind their kinsman.<sup>28</sup>

In the rather recent and standard history of the Bahamas, in introducing the proprietary era, the author sees fit to comment, "The whole era of Bahamian history has an air of farce."<sup>29</sup> He does not specify which events are so amusing, but there is nothing farcical about African Americans and other fugitives from plantation colonies creating their own society, ruling themselves, and for a long time successfully defending their regime. Nor was there anything farcical in the administrative and political skills of Governor Elding during his term of office.

His first letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations is clear, diplomatic, informative, and protective of his Colony's interests:

Yours dated Jan. 2 reached me via Carolina . . . I have not been in the government as deputy [elected governor] longer than from April 14, at which time Governor Webb left the government and designed for England. I have taken all possible care to see all his Majesty's laws put in execution. The West Indies are full of pirates. I have been so severe to these sort of people that about a fortnight now past I had a notorious pirate tried here, condemned and hanged. I am informed that there are several pirates at St. Thomas and Danish ports to windward, and so scattered amongst some of the Maroon Islands, which they expected that some encouragement might be given them as formerly used to be among these territories.<sup>30</sup>

The Governor graciously directs the attention of the anti-proprietary English authorities to the undoubted fact that there were other havens for pirates besides his Bahamas, such as the Danish Virgin Islands and smaller islands beyond all European jurisdiction. The reference to the Maroon Islands is evidently not to the large maroon kingdoms of St. Vincent and Dominica, too far south for this context, but to smaller islands of the Virgins, Turks and Caicos or eastern Bahamas. While thus distracting attention from his own jurisdiction, he also protects his brothers the maroons: They are not *currently* harboring pirates. This coupling of Maroon Islands and pirates, in conjunction with the complexion of Blackbeard's crew, strengthens the hypothesis that pirates were to a significant degree maroons of the sea, social outlaws.





The Governor's familiarity with the Maroon Islands makes one wonder if fugitives hotly pursued took refuge first in the smaller, outer islands, then moved in to New Providence and the several larger and more settled of the Bahamas. This would be a parallel to the fugitives of North Carolina using the swamps when necessary and otherwise living in the open countryside.

Yes, Governor Elding hanged a pirate and captured four others. These acts were helpful to the preservation of Bahamian autonomy and the charter of the Lords Proprietors. They did not represent a political about-face by the Governor. The pirate and wrecker element in the Bahamas was not offended. The enthusiasm of the colored party for their Governor was unabated, and that part included the pirate and wrecker interest. Perhaps the sacrificial lambs were outsiders, non-professionals or irregulars beyond the fraternity of the pirate kings.

Besides a diplomat in official correspondence and a political strategist of high order, Governor Elding was also a skillful lawyer, whether or not he ever chose to plead in the courts of the Bahamas. He handled with aplomb the threats to the people's self-government and the permissive overlordship of the Proprietors that arose during his term. An English Vice Admiral sailed into New Providence harbor one day with papers authorizing him to assume power against usurpers, resisters and rebels. The argument of the English government was that the grant of the Bahamas had not included the prerogatives of establishing a constitution or overlordship of the government, but had merely bestowed upon the Proprietors the allegiance of the Islands (purely sentimental?) and a share of the customs. Governor Elding stopped the proceedings in their tracks, not by force, but by a point in law. He examined the papers and respectfully informed the demanding personage that he could only consider him to be the *alleged* Vice Admiral. For lo, the papers were much erased and underlined, and worse, there was no name "annexed." The alleged Admiral departed the Islands much chagrined, and when the problem was brought before the Lords Justice in Council in England, they referred it to the Council of Trade and Plantations for an opinion.<sup>31</sup> Read Elding well understood the uses of the law's delay, could swiftly find a loophole, and possessed the courage to act with dispatch upon the device available. The "rabble's" love for the Governor is understandable. He was the defender of the weak by means of cunning, the people's ancient folk Trickster seated in the chair of government.

Of course a man of Elding's political understanding thoroughly grasped the vital importance of proprietary rule if his people were to live free. The opportunity to demonstrate this understanding and his loyalty to political allies came when a representative of the Admiralty

of England stepped upon the docks of New Providence and read a proclamation. Henceforth the tithe of profit from wrecks, flotsam and jetsam, would be paid to His Majesty's Government, not to the Proprietors. Immediately upon hearing of the act, the Governor convened the Council of the Bahamas, reported that he had received no notice from the Lords Proprietors nor confirmation from the King's Privy Council, and obtained from the Council a resolution. The royalties would continue to the Proprietors.<sup>32</sup>

Though clearly devoted to the welfare of his people, the great majority of Bahamians, Colonel Elding should not be thought of as an otherwise gentle or scrupulous man. It is reported that he took unto himself the woman of a former governor, and when the latter complained, found grounds for jailing him. The Colonel caned one member of the Council of the Bahamas, and sent him to prison too, for denying the Governor's power to appoint a court for trying pirates. It is also said that during the search for the proscribed pirates, the searchers, supporters of Elding's party and themselves pirates, made use of the exercise to seize innocent merchantmen on the pretext that they were pirate ships. The Governor was tied to the major pirate interest by more than politics and community. His sister was wife of one of the pirate kings.<sup>33</sup>

Read Elding's greatest challenge, and the last challenge to the Bahamas until the end of the old regime, occurred at the end of his term. There arrived at New Providence a new Governor, a New Englander with the New England name Elias Haskett, appointed by the Council of Trade and Plantations though the proprietary charter had not been revoked. In a way not specified he was able to imprison Colonel Elding on the charge of piracy. Perhaps the "better sort," the island opposition to the Colored Party, did not realize that the new Governor's credentials were not from the Lords Proprietors. During Governor Haskett's one month term he proved himself an exceptionally repulsive official, caning citizens who expressed disagreement, including the most prominent, and forcing islanders to accompany him as a retinue, a practice meaningless to the Bahamaians except as a humiliation. His personal idiosyncrasies exacerbated an inevitably impossible political situation. Haskett reported to the Crown that he refused on moral grounds to traffick with such as sat in the assembly, and requested royal troops.<sup>34</sup>

The day of restoration came. Colonel Elding had been granted an audience by the Governor. As the Colonel made his way from prison, the armed population of New Providence, led by the Speaker of the Assembly seized Fort Nassau and the gunpowder magazine. They met their leader before the Governor's house. Haskett was seized by a guard,



commanded by Colonel Elding's brother. The Governor, and the English Judge of Admiralty also seized, were led to the Fort by the people, with the Colonel at the head of the jubilant procession. Ceremonially two cannon were fired. Then:

... the said Elding, at the head of them, first motioned for the people to vote ...

Judge of the Admiralty to be put in irons [?]

All the people, with one consent said, no irons.

Then Elding motioned [moved] for irons to be put upon the Governor.

The people answered, Irons upon the Governor.

Which was accordingly done, "strong and heavy ones." The people, like their leader, were politic. An honorable servant of the Crown, doing his job, was spared. Elias Haskett they sent out to sea in a ketch; he made it to New York. For the sake of public relations with England, Colonel Elding stepped aside, and the government elected as next Governor a supporter of the colored party who had not been prominently involved in Governor Elding's actions against the English authority.<sup>35</sup> Governor Reid Elding's talents had helped to preserve the old order in the Bahamas for another fifteen years to come.

Two years later French and Spanish raids against the Bahamas began; they continued between 1703 and 1706. For security the population scattered, and lived under three Governors, all of the old social order and political regime. They sought a "Captain-General" to coordinate their governments, but not under the English Crown. In 1713 the population was estimated at 1000 pirates and about the same number of other folk. The pirate figure is reasonable enough if it be taken to include wreckers and smugglers and the families of these groups. Two hundred experienced fighting seamen in a dozen well armed ships were enough to constitute more than a nuisance to English commerce. In 1716 with a more favorable political situation in the British Parliament, merchants of London and Bristol obtained the support of the Board of Trade for a royal colony, pressured the Lords Proprietors into relinquishing their charter, and found just the man to overthrow the governments of the Bahamas and establish a normal social order: a slave trader. This Woodes Rogers, well supplied with

craft, men and munitions, waged naval war upon the fleet of the Bahamas and won.

Besides those killed in battle, nine pirates were hanged; Blackbeard and Bonnett escaped to North Carolina; the government and society of the Bahamas were reconstituted.<sup>36</sup> Thus ended the society and political regime so deviant from the plantation model which had flourished for at least fifty years, and perhaps much longer.

The similarities between Roanoke and the Bahamas in the early colonial period are startling. They both relied for security upon natural bulwarks and proprietary government. Both populations were fed by fugitives from plantation societies, the one from the mainland colonies, the other from the West Indies. Both deviated from the normal race relations of the Anglo-American world. Neither instituted chattel slavery to any significant degree. Both were called Godless and lawless, and were, but the significance of these terms is dependent upon the judgements and interests of the evaluators. Neither depended on a commercial cash crop, the one living upon a subsistence economy, the other, with less arable land, scavenging upon the sea. The major political party in both colonies energetically defended autonomy and social system with little internal opposition. They were the bane of other colonies, the one for its harboring of fugitives, the other for its piracy. They became special targets, and fodder for propaganda, in the imperial campaign to revoke the proprietary charters. And both were overthrown by war waged upon them, only two years apart, 1714 and 1716.

In respect to African American history, the Bahamas seem to have possessed a larger population of African descent than did Roanoke, unless Black persons in the latter colony were not racially identified in the records. Then too there was a population of Native American and European descent in Roanoke that did not exist in the Bahamas. Perhaps the proportion of English-speaking persons of African or Native American ancestry was not far different in both colonies. The social history of the two communities establishes that there was a type of colony in seventeenth century British America in which a racial minority could live as full members of the community without being subjected to the kind of racism, with its accompanying slavery, which came to predominate in America. There was an "Other America" besides the familiar one, which was cut off in its youth.

The early history of the Bahamas, in regard particularly to the Colony's African American Governor Read Elding and his party, raises one particular question concerning the history of North Carolina. Did Black members sit in the Assembly of Roanoke? The Assembly lists are missing, for members' names, much less their racial identification.



✓ It would be very strange to learn that Black people did not vote in Roanoke. It would not be so strange to learn that there were African American Assemblymen.

Though so far as we know North Carolina never elected a Black Governor, we do know that the African Americans of Roanoke played an active part in the political support of the old settler regime, an especially valiant one in times of crisis. Black people contributed to the general development of the community's distinctive culture, and in particular to religion and Native American relations. Moreover African Americans of particular enterprise made their mark upon the economic and other public life of the Colony. In all these the history of the Black people of early North Carolina (as of the Bahamas) provides the great pleasure of an entirely affirmative prologue to African American history, whose later chapters, though always filled with heroism, ingenuity and creativity, are also always marred by the endless oppression of racism in its changing forms.

With the conclusion of a history of the Black people in Roanoke, and the offering of a comparison with the Bahamas as reinforcement for the analysis of the mainland Colony, a summary statement of the social history of Roanoke may be confidently stated. The Roanoke community, as an independent country 1650-1665 and a colony, 1665-1714, was founded by various kinds of fugitives from plantation servitude society and continued to be populated by such fugitives to the very end. Protected by natural safeguards and the policies of the Proprietors, this society depended for livelihood upon subsistence production. Though this economy was established by necessity, it was esteemed by the settlers, and accompanied by an ethic which placed leisure or recreation as a higher good than work. Peace with the Native Americans as well as cultural interchange and personal ties were characteristic of the Roanoke culture. Race relations between whites and African Americans were positive. A distinctive religion was developed, admiring of Quakers but not Quaker, unorganized, anticlerical, ecstatic. The community governed itself with virtual self-determination, ousting officials, but cooperating with the Lords Proprietors in what seems to have been a conscious group effort to remain isolated, to prevent progress into the status of a commercial plantation colony. Though not unique, as the Bahamas demonstrate, North Carolina was exceptional among the colonies.<sup>32</sup> If this Colony had not been crushed, and if the other English colonies had been permitted to develop along the same lines, the states in North America today, though English-speaking, would probably in other respects be more like the states of Latin America. There would be a recognized mestizo population; the culture might be less acquisitive, individualistic and enterprising, more bound

to roots and local communal ties. If this "Other America" had become the America of today, the states here would probably be economically underdeveloped, with less wealth, worse poverty, fewer schools and inadequate health care. But the racial conflict in the states, between the privileged white caste and the subordinated races, would be less universal and less sharp.

WOW

Without benefit of systematic research and analysis of the social history of early Colonial North Carolina, three scholars have recently affirmed the puzzling uniqueness of this North American Colony. Out of their general mastery of Colonial history and their insight they have offered brief but cogent descriptions of seventeenth century North Carolina's distinctiveness.

Say Milton Klein and Jacob Cooke in their introduction to the North Carolina volume of their bicentennial series:

Although North Carolina was by 1776 the fourth most populous of England's mainland colonies, no specialized study of its colonial history has hitherto been published. Surely one reason for this unwarranted neglect is the enigmatic character of the colony's history . . . Founded in the seventeenth century as part of the larger settlement called "the Carolinas," North Carolina was from the beginning strikingly different from its southern sister: it had few slaves, no plantation aristocracy, no centers of commerce and culture, and . . . was not closely bound to the mother country. Its colonial history was also in sharp contrast to that of its neighbors to the north: preoccupation with local problems . . . combined with geographic and cultural isolation to give North Carolina a uniquely parochial character . . .

And Wesley Craven states in his *Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*.

Northward along the Carolina coast from Charles Town, and well past Cape Fear, one came at last to Roanoke Island and the uncertain entrances to Albemarle Sound, where a community of perhaps three thousand colonists presented to men of the late seventeenth century a more perplexing problem of identification than any other along the Southeastern coast. St. Augustine was Spanish; Stuart's Town had been Scottish; and Charles Town was English; but Albemarle County was American . . .



Albemarle County was in fact a coastal backwoods that served as a haven for the sort of people who in later years would find their way, for good and sufficient reasons, to Kentucky, Tennessee and Texas. Among those finding refuge there were a good many Quakers, or persons, at any rate, whose religious ideas were irregular enough to win for them that designation.<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3, note 24.

<sup>2</sup> John Spencer Bassett, *Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 14, nos. 4–5 (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), pp. 58–59. Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2, p. 126. Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1956), vol. 1, p. 132. Jesse Forbes Pugh, *Three Hundred Years along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N.C. n.p., 1957), p. 63. This is a most unusual local history, in its scholarliness, lack of focus on genealogy or local pride, use of biography to create a social history of a community, and use of the community's history to illuminate American social history.

<sup>3</sup> Bassett, *Slavery and Servitude*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>4</sup> Rosser Howard Taylor, *Slaveholding in North Carolina: An Economic View*, James Sprunt Historical Publications, vol. 18, nos. 1–2 (n.p.: University of North Carolina, 1926), p. 9 n.

<sup>5</sup> Bassett, *Slavery and Servitude*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Beauregard Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, extra vol. 15 (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), pp. 35, 51 n., 198. Samuel M. Janney, *History of the Religious Society of Friends*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Zell, 1867), vol. 3, pp 178–79.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 192–93.

<sup>8</sup> General Court of Oyer and Terminer (July 28, November 1–3, 1720; March 30–April 4, July 27, October 31–November 2, 1721; March 27–April 7, 1722), *CRNC*, vol. 2, pp. 406, 408–11, 415, 416, 437, 442–45, 447, 463, 465, 466, 471. George Washington Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1930), vol. 1, pp. 37, 125, 125 n., 130–32, 134, 136, 136 n., 140, 142, 144, 144 n., 146–47. Though not a recent work, this is the current standard history.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 11, notes 22–27.

<sup>10</sup> “Henderson Walker to Francis Nicholson” (November 18, 1699), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 517.

<sup>11</sup> Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, 4 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1968–74), vol. 3, *North Carolina Higher Court Records 1697–1701* (sub-series vol. 2), pp. 98–100, 114–15, vol. 4, 1702–1708 (sub-series vol. 3), p. 113. *North Carolinian: A Quarterly Journal of Genealogy and History* 1 (October 1955): 77–78.

<sup>12</sup> Parker, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, vol. 3, *Higher Court Records 1697–1701* (sub-series vol. 2), pp. 12, 66, 73, 523, vol. 4, 1702–1708 (sub-series vol. 3), p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 1697–1701 (sub-series vol. 2), pp. 59–60, 63.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 3, note 24.

<sup>15</sup> Chapman J. Miling, *Red Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), pp. 123, 123 n. See also below, Chapter 7, note 50.

<sup>16</sup> “Representation to the Lords Proprietors” (1679), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 261.

<sup>17</sup> Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of North Carolina from the Earliest Period*, 2 vols. (New Orleans, La.: n.p., 1829), vol. 1, p. 240.

<sup>18</sup> Council of North Carolina (November 4, 1718); *ibid.* (November 11, 1718); General Court, North Carolina (July 28, 1719); all in *CRNC*, vol. 2, pp. 313, 315–16, 358.

<sup>19</sup> Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 274. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), p. 32. Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, N.C.: Daughter of the American Revolution, 1914), p. 56. E. E. Ferebee, *Economic and Social Survey of Princess Anne County*, University of Virginia Record Extension Series, vol. 8, no. 9 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia, 1924), p. 8. Samuel A’Court Ashe, “Our Own Pirates, Black Beard and Bonnett,” *North Carolina Booklet* 2 (1902): 8, 11, 13, 15–18. For the race of the crew, see also Royal Council of Virginia, *Journal*, March 11, 1719, in *CRNC*, vol. 2, p. 327.



<sup>20</sup> Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 87–88. The final surrender of the Proprietors in 1729 was a minor event. Charles Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934–1938), vol. 3, p. 267.

<sup>21</sup> The Lords Proprietors sometimes denominated themselves, even in business concerning the mainland colonies, "The Lords Proprietors of Carolina and the Bahamas" or "The Lords Proprietors of Carolina and the Bahama Islands." *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, vol. 17, 1699 (H.M. Stationary Office, 1908), docs. 911, 998, hereafter cited as *CSPCS*. Each volume cited, besides the date, is entitled *America and the West Indies*.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (London: Collins, 1962), pp. 38–39.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Percival Newton, *The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493–1588* (London: A. and C. Black, 1933), p. 56. The Islamic hypothesis for the island names has been proposed independently by the author and the associated local historians Paul Albury, D.D.S. and Cleveland W. Eneas, D.D.S., of New Providence, the Bahamas. The author was informed of their work, the green waters of Eleuthera, and a Muslim folk tradition among some Bahamians, by Mr. McNair Brown of the Bahamas Tourist Office, Chicago. See also: Philip Means, *The Spanish Main*, Focus of Envy, 1492–1700 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> "Governor Elias Haskett to the Council of Trade and Plantations" (July 19, 1701); "Memorial of Governor Haskett in Answer to the Deposition of the People of Providence and Michael Cole" (July 6, 1702): *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701, (1910), doc. 655, vol. 20 1702 (1912), doc. 702.

<sup>25</sup> Craton, *Bahamas*, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 89–92. "Lt. Governor Hasket to Council of Trade and Plantations" (December 27, 1701), *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910), doc. 1113.

<sup>27</sup> "Read Elding to James Vernon" (October 4 1699); "Edward Randolph to the Council of Trade and Plantations" March 25, 1700; "Read Elding to Mr. Secretary Vernon" (April 12, 1700); *CSPCS*, vol. 17, 1699 (1908), doc. 840, vol. 18, 1700 (1910), docs. 250, 318. The substance of Governor Elding's reports implies smooth or formal and correct correspondence from the English side as well. Randolph, on his crusade, attacks the proprietary Governor as a pirate or friend of pirates, yet recognizes Elding's office and maintains respect for it.

<sup>28</sup> "Hasket to the Council of Trade" (December 27, 1701); "Randolph to the Council of Trade" (March 25, 1700); *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701(1910), doc. 113, vol. 18, 1700 (1910), doc. 250.

<sup>29</sup> Craton, *Bahamas*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> "Read Elding to James Vernon" (October 4, 1699), *CSPCS*, vol. 17, 1699 (1908), doc. 840.

<sup>31</sup> "Order of Lords Justice in Council" (July 31, 1701), *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910), doc. 685.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Walker, "State of the Bahama Islands" (April 24, 1701), *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910), doc. 1042-ix-A.

<sup>33</sup> "Randolph to the Council of Trade" (March 25, 1700), *CSPCS*, vol. 18, 1700 (1910), doc. 250. "Hasket to the Council of Trade" (December 27, 1701), *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910), doc. 1113.

<sup>34</sup> Craton, *Bahamas*, p. 92. "Mr. Cole to the Council of Trade and Plantations" (February 17, 1702), *CSPCS*, vol. 20, 1702 (1912), doc. 120. "Haskett to the Council of Trade" (July 19, 1701), *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910) doc. 655.

<sup>35</sup> "Thomas Walker to Governor Nicholson" (New Providence: October 11, 1701); "Hasket to the Council of Trade" (December 27, 1701); *CSPCS*, vol. 19, 1701 (1910), docs. 1042-viii-C, 1113, 1113-ii.

<sup>36</sup> Craton, *Bahamas*, pp. 93-94, 96-102, 104, 106.

<sup>37</sup> The exception among historians of North Carolina was Francis I. Hawks, whose history was published in 1858. He clearly saw that early Albemarle was a community of fugitives with a distinctive culture. Though the present study of early North Carolina was not suggested by Hawks's work, and its hypothesis was developed before the author read Hawks, it may be considered a systematic and documented history which substantiates the understanding Hawks evinced in scattered passages, often without documentation. In other respects the two studies are entirely different. Hawks was unsympathetic to the Roanoke community, the present study, sympathetic. His primary purpose was to introduce the later history of North Carolina; the primary purpose of the present study is to trace the prehistory of the Dismal Swamp maroons.

Among Hawks's insights were the fugitive origin of Albemarle, the independence of the early settlement, and the culture's peculiarities in race relations and religion. Citations of Hawks have been included in the present study under the various topics. Hawks was appalled at the society he identified, expressed hearty thanks for its overthrow, and avoided tracing the roots of North Carolina to that society by sharply distinguishing between the early "rogue" community and North Carolina, which to him meant normal colonial society established by later settlers. (Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, p. 148.)

Historians after Hawks, rather than accepting his logic, have included early Roanoke in the history of North Carolina but refrained from emphasizing its distinctiveness. Though they have honored Hawks for his general work, they have cited his opinions rarely, especially on the character of the early society. In the systematic critical study of the early historians of North Carolina, Stephen B. Weeks praises Hawks for his demonstration that history is social as well as political, and for his exceptional scholariness for the time, but concludes with emphasis upon Hawks's alleged weaknesses, dogmatism, partisanship, and utter failure to



understand the people of North Carolina, expressed in his constant harping upon the Colony as a harbor for runaway rogues. In other words, this urban, cosmopolitan, elite Episcopalian, held captive by his extreme bias and ignorance of frontier, rural and impoverished North Carolina, is insulting the State. [Stephen B. Weeks, "The North Carolina Historians," *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Session of the State Literary and Historical Association of North Carolina*, North Carolina Historical Commission Publications, Bulletin no. 18 (Raleigh: n.p., December 1914), pp. 79-80.]

But Hawks was critical of the political policy of his Episcopal Church in early North Carolina, and his elaborate logical effort to separate Roanoke from North Carolina indicates that he was sensitive to the feelings of other North Carolinians and sought to protect them from the social description he felt bound to present. He certainly found the fugitive community repulsive, but his fascination with this sub-culture would appear to have arisen from his life work as a pioneer anthropologist. Rising in the academic world and the Episcopal Church, he left his native North Carolina for a seminary chair in New York in the practically unheard-of specialty of comparative religions. A founder of the American Ethnological Society, he taught courses in Native American religion, published books on the cultures of ancient Egypt and the Inca Empire, and was chosen to write the anthropological introduction to Commodore Perry's official report on Japan. He was able to relate these studies to his ecclesiastical mandate by a liberal or broad Church view of early civilizations and religions as precursors of modern Christian civilization. On balance it seems very likely that he published his description of the fugitive community in his history of North Carolina out of his professional and personal interest in variant cultures, rather than omit the material and receive a more positive reception from his fellow North Carolinians. [Evert A. Duyckinck, *A Memorial of Francis L. Hawks*, D. D., LL. D.] (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1871), pp. 25-26. H. G. Jones, *For History's Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History, 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 199-202. *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>38</sup> Milton M. Klein and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., editors' introduction to Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, A history of the American Colonies in Thirteen Volumes, pp. xiii-xiv. Wesley Frank Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607-1689*, A History of the South, vol. 1 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), pp. 408-409.

## Part II

### The Old Settlers Party

The Political History of North Carolina  
Reconsidered, 1665–1714



## Chapter 6

### A Tory Connection: Roanoke in Power, 1665-1708

Racists or elitists of bygone, more outspoken times could detect the presence of foreign elements in the history of Anglo-Saxon America, as did Francis Hawks in his discovery of the fugitive character of early Albemarle society. Scholars with a sweeping mastery of a region or an era, such as Craven, can state the crux of a problem in historical interpretation without the specific systematic research and analysis required to establish the solution firmly. It is difficult however to see how the puzzle of proprietary North Carolina could ever be solved in convincing detail except by beginning with the outsiders to Anglo-Saxon American history: Poor Whites, African Americans and Native Americans. This study of colonial North Carolina in its research and conceptualization moved from the heart of African American history to problems in United States colonial history: First, the history of Black resistance to slavery; second, the discovery that there were indeed maroon communities in the United States; third, a search for the circumstances of the founding of the long lived maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp; fourth, the noting that fugitives from North Carolina fled into the Dismal Swamp immediately before the first record of maroons inside the Swamp; and, finally, the investigation of early North Carolina to determine what there was in its social and political order which could produce such a result. Hence this history of Roanoke, a subject of interest to those concerned with general colonial and Southern as well as African American history. Histories of race relations abound, magnificent studies of the internal history of the Black community have appeared, but this third facet or use of African American history is neglected. The history of the Black people can

provide answers to puzzles or cast further light upon important events in the general history of the United States.

The political history of Albemarle or North Carolina during the proprietary period is dramatic, but can be briefly summarized in the following phases. Five years after the Colony was established, in 1670, a series of laws was enacted which began North Carolina's notoriety among the other colonies. In 1677 appointed officials tried to enforce new English customs laws in the Colony and were overthrown by settlers in what is called Culpeper's Rebellion, a "rebellion" that was condoned by the proprietors at the expense of the ousted officials. During the next twenty-five years there were lesser political conflicts and less dramatic oustings of officials, but more often than not the settlers found the appointees compatible. They were particularly pleased with the Quaker Governor and Proprietor John Archdale, who resided in the Carolinas in the 1680s and 1690s. In 1704 efforts began to prevent the seating of elected members of the Assembly, and in 1708 supporters of the excluded Assemblymen arose in arms in what is called the Cary Rebellion, restored the Assembly as elected, and expelled the offending officials. Again Proprietors supported the "rebels." This singular freedom to remove governors and other officials forcibly and sometimes tumultuously exercised during forty-three years, has been seen by historians as the work of old settler families who had come to the region before the establishment of the Colony. Towards the latter half of the proprietary period this dominant party began to select Quakers as their representatives. In 1711, three years after they had regained control of the Assembly, the long era of leadership by early settlers and their children was ended by an invasion ordered by the government of Virginia in support of the political opposition. In the same year the Tuscarora War began, ending in 1714 with the expulsion of that Native American nation. The new political regime in North Carolina, brought to power by South Carolina forces against the Tuscaroras as well as Virginia's aid, sealed its triumph with the enactment of a legal code designed to transform society as well as government upon the model of the other Southern plantation colonies. Immigration and commercial agriculture did increase, and this progress accelerated after the official revocation of the proprietary charter in 1729. Like its neighbors North Carolina was now under direct English rule, and led at home by planters.

Even as there have been enduring puzzles concerning the pre-colonial settlement, so also questions have been much discussed but unresolved regarding the proprietary period. Why was the party of the pre-colonial families so restless or high-spirited? What was this party's purpose or program, and what motivated its supporters? Why did the



Lords Proprietors so often benignly accept the forcible removal of officials they had appointed? Did pacifist Quakers lead a war, the Cary Rebellion? Was there a knowing connection between settlers and Native Americans when they fought the same enemy in the same year?

✓ 1  
Nine of the earliest laws of North Carolina, enacted in 1670, have survived. Four seem unremarkable: a salary for the governor; no Indian trade by foreigners; no tax levy upon immigrants in the first year; no profiteering by buying cheap and holding to sell dear. But the other five were not the sort that other colonies could approve. The laws welcoming fugitive debtors and establishing civil marriage, which have been discussed earlier to show the distinctiveness of Roanoke culture, were greeted elsewhere with scandalized denunciation. The remaining three were land laws. One forbade purchasers of land from selling within two years. Another ordered the confiscation of land purchased and improved but unused. The third restricted the size of plantations to 660 acres, except for the nobility, the fantasy elite of the *Fundamental Constitutions*, whose number in North Carolina was negligible.<sup>1</sup> The first and second laws deterred investments in land; the third placed the government on record as opposed in practice to large units of agricultural production. Together these land laws discouraged the development of a plantation economy such as those which already characterized Virginia and Maryland and would flower most fully in South Carolina. The laws also discouraged land speculation, an economic activity that does not necessarily result in the establishment of plantations, but which has been a preliminary or accompaniment to land development for agriculture throughout American history, including the establishment of the seventeenth century plantation colonies.

✓ 2  
If there were any persons at this early date in North Carolina who wished Roanoke to become as other colonies, they would have been an opposition to this legislative program. These laws indicate that the program of the majority in the Assembly at the beginning of the Colony included the enactment of unusual social customs or values elsewhere considered contrary to morality and good order, and the discouragement of a plantation economy. A recent historian of the Colony, Mattie E. Parker, has offered the opinion that there must have been considerable opposition to the land laws, and has expressed wonder as to how such laws could have been pushed through the Assembly, since they threatened not only individual interests but also the economic progress of the Colony.<sup>2</sup> If however, as was maintained above, most early settlers were of fugitive origin, subsistence farmers, neither planters nor would-be planters, then the land laws appear as deliberate efforts to prevent the rise of large plantations and the associated pursuit



of well-financed land jobbing. Motives also appear: detestation and fear of plantation society. Opposition to the laws then would have been small, at this date perhaps too small for representation in the Assembly.

A related policy of the local government during the first decade of the Colony was active discouragement of immigration and settlement south of Roanoke or Albemarle Sound. It should be remembered that in the proposal for two governments in North Carolina, the Proprietors were suggesting that new immigrants with the more usual motivation would be directed to the south of the sound. The Roanoke settlers undoubtedly did not want ambitious immigrants in their sanctuary, but neither did they want them to the south. Since North Carolina had adopted a unitary government, the development of an immigration that was not fugitive south of the Sound would threaten the old settlers' control of the government. The absence of such new settlement in the south would insure continuing Roanoke rule over a North Carolina otherwise empty of settlers. The Proprietors repeatedly ordered encouragement of southern expansion and protested the local government's discouragement of such progress, but to no avail.

Another discordant note between Colony and Proprietors was a simple misunderstanding. Roanoke settlers carried on a small trade in tobacco with petty New England merchants because Roanoke Sound was too shallow for large vessels. But the Proprietors thought the unprofitable trade was by choice, and urged a direct Atlantic trade with England.<sup>3</sup> When they learned the truth in the late 1670s, they dropped the complaint. It has been sometimes thought that such disagreements between Proprietors and settlers caused the tempestuous events of Roanoke politics. But the relation between Proprietors and the dominant settler element must be judged not by casual Roanoke disobedience and the plaintive chiding of Proprietors, but by the Proprietors' permissive attitude towards the removal of officials, and their support for the party of old settlers when crises of political opposition occurred. Settlers preferred the light yoke of proprietary government to the grand imperial design of English authority. Proprietors continued to value easy collection of quitrents more than economic progress in Roanoke; for capital investment in such progress the Proprietors turned to South Carolina.

In 1677 Roanoke experienced its first adamant opposition from officials and forcibly turned them out. Various causes have been suggested for this "Culpeper's Revolt." Those ousted claimed it was a premeditated conspiracy motivated by envy, ambition, personal quarrels and the rebels' needs to protect themselves from punishment for former crimes.<sup>4</sup> A less interested source points out that hurricanes, droughts



and torrential rains had exacerbated the poverty of the Colony, causing the new customs duties to be unbearable.<sup>5</sup> Most historians have had no problem accepting the cause of the uprising generally offered at the time:<sup>6</sup> A few settlers engaged in a small tobacco trade with the New England seamen. A larger number of settlers depended on the growing and sale of a little tobacco as cash for the purchase of a few imported necessities. Because of the smallness of the trade and the difficulties of transportation, the price obtained for tobacco was already low, and the price of imports high. The new customs duties would diminish the income of the settlers even more, and the traders from New England promised to add the cost of customs to the prices of goods imported if North Carolina imposed the duties. Thereupon when some officials energetically administered the new customs law, the people arose and replaced them with cooperative officials from their own midst. The only addition now offered to this exploration of the uprising is the suggestion that the opposition to customs, so common in the colonies and England, was not mitigated in North Carolina by any devotion to external or imposed law and order. The special origin of these settlers did not promote reverence for authority.<sup>7</sup>

A different explanation for the uprising of 1677 has been recently advanced. Newly discovered documents show that at this time the Proprietors had been negotiating with Virginia for the sale of Albemarle, to relieve themselves of the unending vexation of that Colony's claim. They were under the impression that the sale was complete, that Virginia had agreed upon the terms, and that Albemarle was no longer under their jurisdiction. It turned out not to be so, but in the mid-1670s the settlement was decidedly a legal no-man's-land, even more than usual. Neither the officials ousted nor the settlers ousting constituted a legal government. The historian then offers constitutional chaos as the cause of the uprising, and such constitutional problems, though usually less acute, as general cause of the political turmoil during the proprietary period.<sup>8</sup> This view does show why the North Carolina government appeared ripe for seizure by local factions, usurpers or insurgents. But it does not explain why some persons supported one *de facto* government, and others supported another. If there had been no disagreement, all would have passively supported whoever chose to perform the functions of government in absence of constitutional authority. This discovery of the constitutional void does however point up justifications settlers may have used for rising up, and more importantly, one more resource for the settlers in their exercise of self-determination. In the case of the uprising of 1677, it also casts light on the current phase of Proprietor Shaftsbury's general testimony that Albemarle had never possessed a legal government,

when he threw the support of the Proprietors to the "rebels" against the officials.

This "Culpeper's Rebellion" should be called Durant's Uprising, since it was neither a rebellion against constituted authority nor led by Culpeper.<sup>9</sup> Its leader was that George Durant who had been one of the pre-colonial settlers, had witnessed Governor Nathaniel Batts's Native American land title, himself took out the second land title of that jurisdiction, and whose kinship or friendship was memorialized by the Durant dynasty of the Yeopim Native American Nation. Following Governor Batts's official administration of independent Roanoke down to 1665, and his unofficial leadership as the Old Governor for a few more years, his old associate Durant became political leader of the Roanoke community in the 1670s. Durant's leadership was followed in the last decades of the Roanoke community by John Archdale, the English Quaker Proprietor and Governor, who became an adopted member of the old settler community and when not present himself was represented by his numerous family who came and went, some permanently settling in North Carolina.

At the time of Durant's Uprising, its leader was bound to the old settler cause not only by community identification but by personal interest as one of the small tobacco traders of the Colony. During his public career he shared leadership with his wife; he provided the physical action, she the systematic thought. Ann Durant was an attorney who pleaded in the courts of North Carolina. She was her husband's lawyer at the time of the 1677 crisis as well as in more peaceful times. She was also the professional undertaker of the Colony, a matter of interest in connection with the leadership of the Durants, in that this profession is not supposed to have emerged in America until much later. In her time elsewhere there were gravediggers and hired mourners, usually women, to lay out and sit with the body, but direction and coordination were by the church and the bereaved family. Mistress Durant's work was more extensive, including the full range of preparations which today, in altered details, are performed by funeral directors. She attended or made arrangements for attendance upon the dying as well as the dead, made the funeral clothes, arranged for construction of the coffin, provided the "rug" for burial, rented the building for funeral and wake, and obtained and arranged for serving of rum and other refreshments at the wake.<sup>10</sup> This appearance of a secular profession and business for the management of death long before its general development would seem related to the unusual lack of churches in Roanoke and the unchurched status and anticlericalism of most settlers. Her two professions were probably political assets. They could reflect an unusual status for women in Roanoke Society.



John Culpeper, whose name has been given to the uprising, was one of the leaders under George Durant. His formal role appear, to have been secretarial and advisory rather than policy-making; his informal role may have been ideological and inspirational, a link between the local uprising and broad concern for human freedom. He seems to have been the professional agitator among the leaders. It was alleged that he had been involved in disturbances in New England and Virginia, but more credence has been lent to the charge that he "some tyme before fled from South Carolina where he was in danger of hangg [hanging] for laying the designe & endeavoring to sett the poore people to plunder the rich." There is record of Culpeper's presence on the Ashley River in South Carolina in the earlier 1670s during the chaotic preliminaries to the founding of Charleston, but no direct evidence of his alleged seditious activities. The circumstances however provide context for the charges against him. Hunger among the disorganized settlers and Spain's efforts to destroy the Colony from St. Augustine before its firm establishment created great distress and discontent. Slaves escaped and joined the Spanish in Florida with information on the weakness of the English settlement. Whites too fled to the Spanish or to their Native American allies who opposed the English incursion.<sup>11</sup> There is evidence of a folk tradition about Culpeper two centuries later among the outcast descendants of the Roanoke community, suggesting that it was he who lent fire to Durant's Uprising, and providing a clue to why it was his name that was attached to the uprising rather than that of Durant or one of the other old settler leaders.<sup>12</sup> If there was an ideologist among the leaders, in a European sense, it was Culpeper, though we cannot know if he saw his zealous career in terms of the old sectarian radicalism of the English Civil War, relief for English Catholics by appeal to Spain and France, or some now unknown ideology arising in America from the plight of slaves and servants.

Durant's Uprising had all the trappings of a rebellion except a legal government against which to rebel. During 1677 new grievances were added to the core complaint against the new customs duty and consequent prices for tobacco and imports. Thomas Miller, the acting Governor whose credentials as well as constitutional status were irregular, increased his efforts to collect the duties, patrolling Roanoke Sound by boat. Against settlers who opposed his authority he initiated capital proceedings for sedition rather than smuggling.<sup>13</sup> To augment his authority he established a piping guard of honor to proceed him on his rounds. That there were bagpipes at Roanoke to preserve the fugitive community's Celtic heritage was well enough. But settlers found the ostentation offensive and another sign of Miller's incompatibility with their values.

Durant departed the Colony for aid, and at the end of the year returned upon one of the New England trading vessels, loaded with arms. Thirty to forty settlers of Pasquotank thereupon seized the customs records and imprisoned Miller and the officials who supported him.<sup>14</sup> "The Remonstrance of Paspatancke" (Pasquotank) was composed by John Culpeper and circularized to the other precincts of Roanoke. It offered two reasons for the deposing of the Governor, to secure a freely elected Assembly, and to make known the people's grievances to the Lords Proprietors. The grievances listed were exorbitant extraction of the customs duty, the denial of free elections, Miller's tyrannic behavior, and finally upon Durant's return the Governor's personally levelling a pistol against the breast of the community leader.<sup>15</sup> Settlers were already mobilized after an attack upon Roanoke from the general Native American uprising in Virginia, and they rallied in arms to the defense of Durant and his associates.<sup>16</sup> It was at this time, according to a report by the opposition, that fugitives from Virginia servitude, including African Americans, were able to reach the armed forces of Roanoke and join them,<sup>17</sup> attracted by the uprising and the principles of the community. The report is supported by the coincidence of the great Pan-Native-American attack upon Virginia, a cataclysm for that Colony which provided the finest cover for the escape of slaves and indentured servants from the plantations.

Following the Roanoke community's seizure of power, John Jenkins, the former and amenable Governor was restored to office, an Assembly was elected, and both parties dispatched emissaries to England to obtain justice from the Proprietors and the courts. The friends of the excise tax and opponents of the old settler interest urged the sending of an eight or ten gun warship and land forces from Virginia to suppress the Roanoke government,<sup>18</sup> an especially interesting proposal in that this was precisely the action taken thirty-three years later by English authorities that permanently suppressed the Roanoke community. But now the Lords Proprietors stood by their subjects and friends, the Roanoke settlers, by means of Shaftesbury's court testimony that the Miller government had not been constitutional; there was not yet a force in England or the colonies to gainsay the Proprietors.<sup>19</sup> So far as is known Miller and his colleagues never received satisfaction for their troubles.

The Lords Proprietors of Carolina, in their overlordship of North Carolina, have not fared well at the hands of historians. Early scholars viewed their support or acquiescence to the rabble as "imbecilic," an image of the Lords as decadent cavalier fops.<sup>20</sup> Some recent historians have suggested that the Proprietors' action after the Durant Uprising was prompted by their fear of charter loss; they wished to hush up



unpleasant news from Albemarle by squelching the litigation.<sup>21</sup> But Shaftesbury's astounding testimony in the king's court was no way to avoid publicity, and the time was too early for the great concerted political campaign against proprietary charters which raged in the 1690s and the following decade.

The recently dominant evaluation of the Proprietors is somewhat more favorable. Though still a weak assemblage of rulers, they are granted to have had positive reasons for what they did. The Proprietors, at first perplexed by the politics of their new colony, sought to be constructive and finally determined that the Durant-Culpeper-Jenkins faction was the most representative.<sup>22</sup>

The analysis here offered substantiates this conclusion, and presents the Proprietors in a still more favorable light respecting rational concern for their property and mandate to rule. What has been seen as idiocy and extreme lassitude was neither; it was however a colonial policy very different from that adopted by England, and less successful for the increase of wealth and the establishment of well-ordered societies.

Proprietors and settlers disagreed on such issues as encouraging settlement south of the Sound and establishment of a direct Atlantic trade, but these were not matters of life and death. At first the Proprietors favored the new English customs law as a way of turning Roanoke from its petty coastal trade with New England towards the more lucrative ocean trade with England.<sup>23</sup> But when they learned that the geography of Albemarle prevented the preferred direction of commerce, they ceased to view the customs act as a benefit. Now its effect could only be seen as an increase of English, not proprietary revenue, more significantly an English political presence in the proprietary, and the further impoverishment of the settlers upon whom the Proprietors relied for their quitrents. Thus support by the Proprietors for their former appointees was not forthcoming. Moreover by supporting the chosen leaders of the Roanoke community the Proprietors continued their policy of tolerating local peculiarities, which had been evidenced in their proposal for two governments in North Carolina, their concern for tender consciences in Roanoke, and perhaps the extension of religious freedom to non-Christians in the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*. All these were in accord with the strategy: Do not lose an unsatisfactory colony in expectation of a better. To the peacemaker Governor sent over after the Durant Uprising, the Proprietors urged no reprisals against either faction, "the good and welfare of all the Inhabitants of our province being what wee most desire and not the taking away of any mans life and Estate."<sup>24</sup>

✓ The policy of the Proprietors was when possible, that is in South Carolina, to encourage the development of a normal plantation colony based upon bound labor producing a profitable cash crop; but when there were social and geographic obstacles to this course, rather than endeavoring to overcome them, the Proprietors tolerated the abnormal colony and drew their quitrents in Roanoke, their share from wrecks in the Bahamas. The principal reason for this policy, more flexible and less integrated than that of the English government, was probably that the Proprietors lacked the resources to overturn or discipline an unsatisfactory colony, without the help of England; seeking that help would diminish their own prerogatives. A minor cause may have been a difference of attitude between the friends of Charles II and the mercantile interests who worked with the English Board of Trade and Plantations, the former thinking like traditional landlords, their eye on the immediate rent, the latter like progressive merchants, their focus upon the long-range construction of a mercantile empire. It must not be thought that the Proprietors were motivated by any friendship for fugitive servants or escaped slaves; the progress of South Carolina discounts that. The interests of the Proprietors, in the framework of their policy, coincided with the needs of the Roanoke and Bahama settlers, to be left alone, not to be brought into a progressive imperial design that would establish a cash crop economy and involuntary labor.

power divisions ✓  
There has been confusion regarding the two political parties which are evident at Albemarle from the 1670s through the 1710s. A general source of the problem has been a lack of appreciation of the particularity of proprietary North Carolina, a reading into the Roanoke scene of political divisions found in other colonies and later times. Characteristic of American colonial history in general was a struggle between governors, representing the Crown and later the English Parliament, and the Assemblies, representing local interests. Those supporting these are conveniently called prerogative parties (for the royal power) and anti-prerogative parties. But this division cannot be read into the politics of proprietary North Carolina,<sup>25</sup> where the Assembly or self-determination party was not opposed to the proprietary prerogative but dependent on it for protection. Also the political issues at Roanoke were not like those of the other party system, which centered about the respective powers of the executive and legislative branches, such as appointments and control of finances.

The error of ascribing anti-proprietary sentiment to the dominant party in Roanoke was exacerbated when a section on mid-eighteenth century North Carolina politics in R.D.W. Connor's *History of North Carolina* was accidentally misplaced during publication in the proprietary section of a later version of his work, *Rebuilding An*



*Ancient Commonwealth.* Through this technical error Assembly opposition to the royal prerogative in the royal colony, including a list of the later issues, appeared to be descriptive of an Assembly program in opposition to the proprietary authority during the earlier period. The error has been followed by later historians.<sup>26</sup>

The party of the old settlers which dominated politics during the proprietary era has been called "the Anti-Proprietary Party," which it was not. As Wesley Craven observed, the lines were not so sharply drawn as the names that have been assigned.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover in the two major crises, 1677 and 1708, the wrongly labeled "Proprietary Party" was struggling not for some demand made by the Proprietors, but for regularization of the Colony in accord with imperial policy and the wishes and example of the royal colonies. Thus the party of the old settlers was more a proprietary party than the party of their opponents, what with the accommodation between settlers and Proprietors. Never did the old settlers rise up against the Proprietors, but only against the demands of the English government or the actions of newcomers who supported the imperial perspective. ✓

When the opposition to the old settler interest is called the Prerogative Party, it must be understood as advocacy of the royal not proprietary prerogative. The old settler interest may correctly be called the popular party; it can also be called the conservative or traditionalist party, in that it defended the old ways of the Roanoke community. In this context the opposition becomes the progressive party, in support of the rising tide of empire and economic progress. But it is suggested that the clearest and simplest name for the dominant party is "Old Settlers Party." The clearest description of the opposition is Royal or Imperial.

Evidence that the opposition to the Old Settlers Party also opposed the Proprietors and supported the interests of the Crown is their energetic imposition of the customs duties before the Durant Uprising. Other evidence is their enactment of an elaborate law code to promote the imperial design after their final overthrow of the Roanoke community, which will be discussed in its proper chronological place. There is also direct testimony by this party that they were conscious of their loyalty to the Crown, not the Proprietors. In 1680 twenty-nine inhabitants of Albemarle, describing themselves as supporters of a thorough collection of custom duties and of the overthrown officials petitioned the King. They complained of "ye fals & tretchrous dealing & Combinations of their [the Durant party's] Agents wth ye Lds propters," asked royal "interposition" at Albemarle, and claimed that they had been persecuted by settlers who were supported 'by the Proprietors, because of their loyalty and fidelity to the royal interest.

They also added confirmation to the social analysis offered earlier. The supporters of Durant and his victorious government were numerous enough to "oversway" the whole country, and they were a rabble of the poor and ignorant.<sup>28</sup>

It is necessary to ask, though impossible to answer from evidence, why the Lords Proprietors so often sent over officials who turned out to oppose the wishes of the settlers, though this was not the desire of the Proprietors, and to join with the royal or imperial interest, which towards the end included the revocation of proprietary charters. Historians have mentioned that there appears to have been a problem in the recruitment of administrative personnel;<sup>29</sup> the Proprietors themselves may have been aware of the problem. The extremely limited economy of Roanoke did not offer much on the side for the financial gain of governors and their staff, and the curious social order and culture, provided little comfort for outsiders used to the society of England or the more ordered colonies. It can only be offered as suggestion that ambitious and career-minded managers sent over by the Proprietors could only find their reward in the future, by supporting not their employers but king and English parliament, towards later employment by the English government in the royal colonial or domestic service. Though the record is incomplete for all the gubernatorial administrations, there seems to be a pattern of good relations between governors and community, to the satisfaction of Proprietors as well as settlers, when the governors were Roanoke folk or Proprietors and the relatives of Proprietors, rather than hired career administrators.

Within a few years after the Durant Uprising an important development occurred in the Old Settler Party, the coming of Quakers into leadership. At the time of the Durant Uprising, Quakers of Roanoke, newly converted by William Edmundson, were not yet numerous enough to form a congregation, and it would appear they remained neutral in the conflict. One of the aggrieved supporters of Thomas Miller and the Empire Party presented a missive in London with a number of signatures, stating that they, Quakers of Albemarle, had been persecuted by the Old Settler Party for their neutral stand.<sup>30</sup> The language of the document is in Quaker style, but it is a little strange that Quakers not yet ready to organize a Meeting would join in this partisan project. If the statement of grievance is authentic, it did not take the Quakers long to forgive their former enemies. In the 1680s the number of convinced Quakers increased, Meetings were organized, and the Old Settler Party began to choose members of the Society of Friends as delegates to the Assembly. A report of 1708 by one of the



Anglican missionaries, in referring to visits by Quaker Proprietor John Archdale, dates the Quaker leadership back to the 1680s and 1690s.

The Quakers, though not the seventh part of the inhabitants, yet, by the assistance and contrivance of Archdale, a Quaker and one of the lords Proprietors, have in a manner the sole management of the country in their hands, and of late years have at their pleasure procured a revolution of government as often as he that sat at the helm seemed to favor our Church, or endeavored to make any provision for the ministry . . .<sup>31</sup>

Within several years two other Church of England missionaries confirmed the report, one adding that the multitude of settlers were politically allied with the Quakers on secular as well as religious issues.<sup>32</sup> The other, after explaining that there was no organized religion in the settlement at first, but that those who became Quakers were indeed among the first settlers as they claimed, discussed the basis for Quaker leadership of the multitude.

They allege they are the chief inhabitants, promoters and upholders of its [the Colony's] interests: but this must be either by their number, riches or prudence.

And, he continues, the Quakers possessed none of these bases for political leadership. They constituted only about a tenth of the population, "neither is it by their riches, there being but few or no traders of note among them," and they were an ignorant and obstinate rather than prudent people.<sup>33</sup> The Anglican does not note the political assets they did possess. Before their becoming Quakers they were socially indistinguishable from their fellow settlers; they were still like the majority in origin, lack of formal education and lack of wealth. When settlers turned to them for leadership they turned to their own kind. Complimentary to the political asset of similarity was the asset of difference. Uniquely among the people of Roanoke the Quakers possessed organization, and discipline both as a group and as individuals. In these respects they were a political elite. They were indispensable as spokesmen and coordinators for the Old Settler Party in promotion of the principles upon which Quakers and Quakers agreed: freedom of conscience, separation of state and church, resistance to royal control, and support of the Proprietors. What is more, the Quakers

linked the isolated people of this obscure Colony with Proprietors, and through them, to even more powerful forces in England.

The link between the Quaker leadership of the Old Settler Party and England was Proprietor John Archdale, sometime Governor of the Colony and a Quaker. Archdale has been aptly called the William Penn of the Carolinas. In 1678, the year after Durant's Uprising, he purchased the proprietorship of the deceased Lord John Berkeley; his first experiences at the meetings of the Proprietors were the evaluation of Albemarle politics and the dramatic vindication of the old settlers by Shaftesbury on behalf of the Proprietors. In 1705 Archdale added to his holding the share of Sir William Berkeley, the former Governor of Virginia. One quarter of the Proprietors' votes was an important influence, considering that some Proprietors took little or no part in policy-making, merely drawing their income. Generally there were only one or two active Proprietors, such as Shaftesbury in the earlier and Archdale in the later years.

Archdale's first experience with old settlers' defending themselves against well-ordered colonial systems was in Maine between 1664 and 1666. There he had represented the interests of once self-governing settlements under the antique Gorges Charter against the encroachments of Puritan Massachusetts. After becoming convinced as a Friend by George Fox in the 1670s Archdale paid his first visit to Roanoke in 1683 or a little earlier, as a collector of quitrents for the Proprietors, a work which settlers did not find offensive. In 1685 and 1686 he was acting Governor of North Carolina, which has led some to conclude that he was at Roanoke continuously between 1682 and 1686. Between 1694 and 1696 he was Governor of South Carolina, an office which was senior to the Governorship of North Carolina in constitutional theory, but rarely in practice. In the case of Archdale, he maintained a real and abiding interest in the northern Colony. His last sojourn in Roanoke was in 1696 and 1697. Thereafter he devoted himself to the political support of the Roanoke community among the Proprietors and in English parliamentary politics.

In South Carolina Archdale and his associates vigorously supported the toleration provisions of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, encouraged the immigration of the Dissenter churches, and fought the trade in Native American slaves, which was then the principal commerce in South Carolina and involved that Colony in ceaseless slave raids called Indian wars. Upon his departure from South Carolina he received a testimonial from the people extolling him for his healing of unprincipled factionalism that had racked the Colony.

In North as in South Carolina Archdale lent his weight to peace with the Native American nations. It was his wont in Roanoke to ride



with Quaker missionaries through the forests and along the Swamp, visiting the scattered settlers. He wrote to George Fox of his admiration for Tuscarora leadership and for the bountiful land of Roanoke. After him his family permanently settled in North Carolina, remaining in that Colony and State for generations.

Archdale's family connections loomed large in the trans-Atlantic struggle to preserve the proprietary charter and defend the social order of the Roanoke community. His son Thomas Archdale succeeded to one of his father's shares of the Proprietorship; another relative, probably a nephew, Joseph Blake, succeeded him as Governor of South Carolina and purchased his other share, which was inherited by Joseph Blake Jr. After 1707 one of the Archdale shares passed to Mary Archdale Danson and her husband John; son-in-law John Danson sent a shipload of arms to the Roanoke community in its final struggle for survival, delivered by his Proprietor's Deputy, Richard Roach who became a valiant captain in that war. Most important, it was Archdale's other son-in-law, or stepson, Thomas Cary, who as Governor of North Carolina led the army of Roanoke in the last defense of a way of life.<sup>34</sup>

It is possible that Thomas Archdale's greatest contribution to Roanoke was his political activity in England after 1696. His presence in Roanoke however was a catalyst for the natural political alliance of Quakers and other old settlers, and the choice of Quakers thereafter to represent the Old Settler Party in the Assembly.

The Lords Proprietors of Carolina were a powerful group in England, from their estates, investments and political positions at home as well as their vast holdings in America. Yet they were only one of many powerful interests who competed, sought to advance themselves at the expense of others, eliminated rivals or were eliminated, formed and reformed coalitions of the moment for mutual advantage. The self-interest of some of these powerful groupings conflicted with that of the Proprietors. The colonial bureaucracy itched to bring the proprietary colonies under control. Churchmen eager for the greater glory of the Church of England were aghast at the toleration of Dissenters in South and worse in North Carolina. The Virginia interest in England as well as America was forever hostile to Albemarle. Merchants of the Atlantic trade and associated financiers, waxing in power, grew ever more incensed at the smuggling, illegal wrecking and piracy which they particularly associated with the Bahamas and North Carolina. In the late 1690s and the following decade came the great concerted imperial political campaign to revoke the charters of the proprietaries. How was it then that the Lords Proprietors were able to permit and defend the affront to Christian morals and to good government that was Roanoke during so many years of unpopularity in imperial circles? The Lords

Proprietors had friends at Court and friends at Parliament. They too reached out for powerful allies and joined in coalitions of convenience. Thus by protecting themselves they lent security to the Roanoke community. English Party politics may seem a far cry from the history of maroon and other self-contained wilderness communities. Yet divisions in ruling governments provided security for dissident societies. We shall see in the later maroon studies the same dynamic. Party conflicts, in the British Empire during the American Revolution, and in the United States at the outbreak of the Civil War, gave maroons the opportunity to enter political-military alliances.

The principal powers with which the Lords Proprietors allied themselves were, in the 1670s and 1680s, the Court of the Royal House of Stuart, Kings Charles II and James II, and in the 1690s and the first decade of the eighteenth century, the English political party or parliamentary coalition called Tory. In both the Court and the Tory association, but particularly the latter, another grouping became involved with the Proprietors in mutual defense, including the security of Roanoke: the English Quakers. These, under William Penn, supported James II against his political enemies, and later the Quakers were an important part of the parliamentary Tory party coalition, with Penn still the principal Quaker and John Archdale now joining him in significant activity. In return for Quaker support, James II, later the Tories, promised them complete religious toleration for England. But William Penn, as Proprietor of Pennsylvania, was also spokesman for all proprietary colonies, and John Archdale was the most active of the Proprietors of Carolina. Thus from their political alliances they received both support for toleration as Quakers and defense of proprietary charters as Proprietors. Little Roanoke benefited from both protection for her chartered autonomy, and toleration for a Quaker-led and otherwise irreligious community.<sup>35</sup>

The most active and leading Proprietor of Carolina during the founding of the Colony in the 1660s and the political events in Albemarle during the 1670s was the Earl of Shaftesbury. He was also one of the chief ministers of Charles II until 1673, when he broke with the King and became a principal leader of the political opposition. All of the original Proprietors of Carolina had been supporters of Charles II in the restoration of the House of Stuart to the throne; they had received their grant as reward. When Shaftesbury changed his politics, other Proprietors remained friends of the Court. Thus at this time the Proprietors had their political allies in both the court party and the opposition. Politically they differed, but as the Proprietors of Carolina they searched for support for the proprietary interest among their several circles of power.



Though Shaftesbury had many interests, he thought as a great landholder. On principle "he sedulously guarded the interests of his tenants whose fortunes were interwoven with his." For the stability of rural neighborhood he looked to landlords for leadership in behalf of their tenants. If the latter did not prosper there would be no rents. He believed that all would be well if managers (in the case of colonies, governors) did not destroy the symbiotic relationship of tenants and landlord. For managers too were entrepreneurs, and would be tempted to profit illicitly at the expense of tenants and the landlord-tenant relationship. This was the burden of Shaftesbury's voluminous correspondence in the context of colonies as well as estates in England. One can almost see the Proprietors, the Governor and the settlers during Durant's Uprising in Shaftesbury's general philosophy for landholding. His biographer sees a connection between this philosophy and the toleration provisions of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, giving the people what they want so long as they pay the rent.<sup>36</sup> It is equally reasonable to see the workings of Shaftesbury's principles behind the Proprietors' solicitude for the tender consciences of the Roanoke settlers at the founding of the Colony, the acceptance of the strange customs and virtual self-government of the community, and the defense of the Roanoke "tenants" against bad managers and the interference of outside, commercial imperial influences. The Proprietors as a group accepted Shaftesbury's philosophy, and as they reached out for political alliances they undoubtedly found others who could understand and accept or already held this principle: the contentment of tenants or colonists, for the sake of regular payment of rents or taxes, fostered by the landlord or ruler. There were great English landlords aplenty at the Stuart court, and great landlords also in the leadership of the opposition, who, however they might differ politically, shared the same background and way of life. Like Shaftesbury and the other Proprietors who also pursued the policy he enunciated, they engaged in commerce also but thought first as landed gentry. They might honor themselves with the belief that they were the inheritors of feudalism's *noblesse oblige*, but the policy was practical, to treat an estate or colony as a community, for the easier extraction of profit. Such allies of the Proprietors were thus joined with them by shared perspective as well as exchange of favors. A very different and incompatible perspective was that of the trader, the merchant: buying and selling, changing prices and changing costs, innovation and economic progress. To perceive people as a market is very different from perceiving them as a community. Whether by free trade or the protection of government the process of commerce was perforce impersonal;<sup>37</sup> it could not be symbiotic as could the relationship of landlord and tenant. Never was

the proprietary interest allied with the commercial; it was the coalition of interests which included England's growing commerce that eventually overthrew the charters of the Proprietors and the community of Roanoke.

Besides the special connection of the Proprietors of Carolina with the House of Stuart, and the associations of these Lords with other likeminded great landlords, there was also a particular strategic coalition in the English politics of the 1680s which lent support to the interests of Proprietors and the proprietary colonies. It was an alliance between the House of Stuart and the Quakers, with which Charles II had flirted, but which James II energetically pursued.

The political opposition which developed against the Stuart kings was the Whig Party, or coalition of parliamentary groups. The Whigs feared restoration of the Roman Catholic Church; Charles II was pro-Catholic, and James II was himself a Catholic. The Whigs then were a union of the Protestant-minded of the Church of England and the Dissenter churches, Presbyterian, Independent or Congregational, and Baptist. But at the same time within this alliance against Catholicism the Church of England insisted upon second class status for the Dissenters, civil disabilities upon those who were not Anglican. The Dissenters then, for the sake of their opposition to the toleration of the Catholic Church, were forced to put up with only partial toleration for themselves, as supporters of the Whig Party.

This strain within the opposition caused the Stuarts and their adherents to conceive of a remarkable political finesse. They would offer total toleration for all churches, which decisive elements of the established Church of England in the Whig Party were never prepared to do. The strategy was designed to produce two effects. It would bring back the Catholic Church under the grant of universal toleration. And it would split the Whig opposition, bringing over to the Stuart cause at least some of the Dissenters, those who hated the limitations upon their own religious freedom more than they feared Catholicism.

The major Dissenter churches or leaders dismissed the Stuart proposal (as have most historians) as a patently hypocritical and sinister plot, to use Dissenter gullibility as a tool for the restoration of the Catholic Church, and later its supremacy and the outlawing of all Protestant churches. But there were some Dissenters who took the offer of total toleration, even for Catholics, seriously. They resented the disabilities enforced upon their churches and themselves as citizens, and they either believed the sincerity of the Stuart suggestion, or else that the balance of power in the kingdom would prevent the achievement of any hidden, sinister design.



Most notably among those who accepted James II's offer of an alliance were the Quakers. These had suffered greater persecution than had other Dissenters, and sometimes at the hands of more conservative Dissenters as well as Anglicans. They were led in their support of James by William Penn, the wealthiest Quaker and their greatest politician, who also commanded the support of some of the other most radical and persecuted Dissenters, perhaps rank-and-file members of Baptist churches. In Joseph Illick's recent study of this subject, Penn's relationship with James has been presented as one of personal friendship, which it was; but both took the political arrangement as serious and important,<sup>38</sup> and a later similar strategy of Quaker participation under Penn against the Whigs played a significant part in English politics.

William Penn was not only England's leading lay Quaker and a friend and political ally of the king, but also a Proprietor, owner and ruler of the new proprietary Colony of Pennsylvania. As the most active, politically innovative and publicly visible of Proprietors, he gravitated to the position of spokesman of the general proprietary interest, the defender of those charters against detractors.<sup>39</sup> Because of his other role as leader of radical Dissenter support for the Catholic king, the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, like other proprietors, had a voice at court on behalf of their colonial interests.

Yet even before the emergence of Penn into leadership there may have been a mutually supportive relationship between the interests of the Proprietors and the long contemplated Dissenter and toleration strategy of the House of Stuart. One historian has suggested that the sweeping toleration of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, a religious liberty that was actually carried out, was "one of the earliest symptoms of the attempted alliance between the court party and the Non-Conformists" (i.e., the Dissenters).<sup>40</sup> This reasonable supposition makes clearer the position of Carolina Proprietor John Archdale, who served in Roanoke in the 1680s, a friend of Penn as well as fellow Quaker and like him an opponent of the Whig Party. Here was a direct link between Carolina and the House of Stuart, expressed by radical toleration in both Colonies, for Dissenters in South Carolina, for Quakers and unchurched settlers of even stranger ways in Roanoke. Until the overthrow of James II in 1688 Carolina was a testing ground for the political strategy of alliance between King and deviants under the banner of universal tolerance, against the Whig platform of Protestants united, Dissenter disabilities and Catholic exclusion. As the Colony of Pennsylvania and the English Quakers were represented at Court by Penn, so also were Roanoke and its Quakers and quakers, by Penn through Archdale. The politics of foreign policy also entered in. The

English Whig Party feared the power of Catholic France and Spain and sought military confrontation to decide the course of empire. The House of Stuart and its adherents did not contest Catholic rule upon the European continent. Thus Stuart foreign policy relates to Shaftesbury's secret proposals for trade with Spain, a most striking concept for the Carolina-Florida border lands, and the opposition of Archdale and his South Carolina supporters to the frequent slave raids against Florida and Spain's Native American friends. For after the Proprietorial sway of Shaftesbury and later the overthrow of James II, Archdale continued his opposition to slave raids in South Carolina and his support for friendly relations with the Tuscaroras in North Carolina, which had been the policy of the early Proprietors,<sup>41</sup> as Penn continued his political leadership for the preservation of proprietary charters. Both also looked to the continuation of the strategy of radical Dissenter participation in English politics against the self-styled Protestant Party of the Whigs.

Under the Stuarts the opponents of the Whigs and supporters of the kings had been called the Tory Party. Though the House of Stuart was overthrown, and a Protestant king, William III, installed, the Tory opposition to the Whigs continued. The Tories could not openly advocate the restoration of the Stuarts, but they could continue to favor peace with France and Spain. Besides the Whig wars for empire, another target for the Tories was the increasing presence of England's commercial interests in the Whig Party. As they harassed the Whigs in Parliament, the Tories divided on their ultimate political goal. Some, the Jacobites, quietly bided their time for conditions to favor a Stuart restoration, or worked secretly towards that end. Other Tories however chose to proceed as if the Stuart exile were irrevocable, to construct a new Tory Party with a position opposed to the Whigs but not seditious towards the new dynasty.<sup>42</sup> It was to this new Tory party that Penn and Archdale moved, bringing with them their old Stuart strategy of radical Dissenter support for the Tories. Among the Carolina Proprietors the most active now were Archdale and the aged Earl of Craven (the patron of Roanoke's Black Craven the far-travelled). Craven was a Jacobite:<sup>43</sup> thus between the two proprietorial leaders both tendencies of the Tory party could be reached for support.

In 1696, eight years after the "Glorious [Whig] Revolution" which overturned the Stuarts, a new Board of Trade and Plantations arose whose chief aim was to end the proprietary and other chartered colonies. The next year these colonies were put on notice to mend their ways. The means chosen for revocation as well as the end was Whiggish, by act of Parliament, not royal edict. In 1701 all forces against the chartered colonies were focused upon Parliament in this supreme effort for a coordinated empire. The act was defeated, and again in 1702, and



again in 1706, by the Tories,<sup>44</sup> responding to the proprietary lobby, led by the Tory William Penn.

The reader who is not a specialist in the English history of this period must be warned that the use of the terms Tory and Whig Parties can be misleading. Recent research has made it clear that there was no clear-cut two party system. There were many factions or cliques, operating independently, often based upon personal connections, forming and reforming parliamentary coalitions. The recent voluminous literature on this subject has reached no consensus on how many factions there were, how they should be divided for consideration, or how solid were the evolving coalitions. Yet granting the lack of unified parties, most scholars appear agreed that many of the factions can be identified as Whig or Tory, Whig meaning the anti-Catholic, anti-Stuart, war and commercial interests, Tory meaning the opponents of those interests.<sup>45</sup>

There has been less disagreement on the new understanding that support for the Proprietors came more from the Tories than the Whigs. This came somewhat as a surprise, since it had previously been assumed that the Tories, traditionally for a strong monarchy, favored royal colonies, and that Whigs, who claimed a tradition for liberty and the rights of property, voted in defense of the charters. Now however it appears that Whigs sought to establish a uniform system of "royal" colonies to extend the powers of Parliament, and at the behest of their commercial supporters, While Tories, opposing Parliamentary aggrandizement and the commercial Whigs, voted for the Proprietors, and thus, unknowingly, for the security of Roanoke.

There is no Parliamentary record of the vote, but a search for such votes as were reported elsewhere reveals more Tory or Tory-associated than Whig support for the proprietary colonies. Moreover the crusading Board of Trade and Plantations was Whig; many old Whigs, friends of Penn and the proprietary cause, were becoming Tories of the new type; and Robert Harley, the leader of the New Tory coalition with other factions against the Whigs, was an ardent friend of Penn, supporter of the Proprietors, and political co-worker with Archdale. Two scholars have questioned this discovery, that the act to resume charters was defeated by Tories. One however seems to be against the formulation that a Tory Party supported the Proprietors, which still leaves the evidence that separate Tory cliques were more supportive than separate Whig cliques. The other criticism, that the vote was not a party vote in the sense of disciplined common action, is supplemented by the statements that the parliamentary committee responsible for the bill included every merchant and every seaport member of the House of Commons, and that this fact reinforces the new opinion that the

revocation of proprietary charters was more popular among Whigs than Tories.<sup>46</sup>

The new Tory Party (or new coalition of Tory and other cliques against Whig and other cliques) arose in the 1690s, became the opposition to the Whigs, held about the same strength in Parliament as its opponents, and at last came to power between 1710 and 1714. Its leader was Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. He assembled a coalition of old Tories (many doubtlessly unhappy with their new company), new Tories, old Whigs who could not support the new Whig emphasis upon commerce and war, and independents, called the Country Party, who were disturbed by higher taxes for war, increased bureaucracy and growing manipulation of Parliament by patronage. Harley's coalition stood for peace, reform of Parliament from its corruption by patronage, and the revival of the old Stuart strategy of an alliance between Tories and radical Dissenters against the Whig unity of Protestants at Dissenter expense. As in the days of James II the Whigs still could not offer complete toleration because of Anglican demands and anti-Catholic fears; moderate Dissenters still labored under legal disabilities yet supported the Whigs; and Quakers and other radical Dissenters were still willing to risk Catholic emancipation to gain their own freedom. The New Tory Leader, Harley, brilliantly neutralizing old Tories who loved the privileged status of the Church of England, offered real toleration to Dissenters. Most remained Whig, but the strategy was not without success. Harley considered the Quakers and other Dissenters won over by Penn to be an essential part of his support.<sup>47</sup>

Robert Harley himself was of an intense Dissenter background, with radical Dissenter family as well as social connections. His private papers burn with Biblical injunctions more characteristic of the 1650s than the 1700s; he considered himself called by God to lead a national government not at the behest of special interests.<sup>48</sup> As earlier radical Dissenters had been relentless soldiers, he was a ruthless schemer. He hired Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, then famous as a prolific pamphleteer on all sorts of subjects, to present his program subjects, *sub rosa*. As a secret agent for Harley, Defoe wrote and published voluminously, pretending to be a Dissenter of the main line, but injecting ideas designed to cause Dissenters to wonder if they were indeed best served in the Whig Party. Defoe also toured the country, visiting Dissenter communities and surreptitiously introducing Harley's ideas in person.<sup>49</sup>

Harley's greater lieutenant in the strategy of Tory-Dissenter alliance was William Penn, who took up again the role he had played with James II. From the papers of the two men it appears that Penn rallied not only Quakers but other Dissenters who came to follow him rather



than their own leaders. Penn delivered support to Harley; Penn received support from Harley. Candidates for Parliament wrote Harley, asking him to intercede with Penn for the Quaker support in their constituencies.<sup>50</sup> With so much in common religiously the relation between the two was warm, as one of Penn's letters requesting Harley's help shows:

I also enclose a letter just come to hand, that I could not refuse to send, because I would do to others as I would be done, though an uncourtly way of arguing; thinking I am not mistaken in my hero. I wish thee all true happiness.<sup>51</sup>

Besides his associate in the Tory-Dissenter alliance, Penn was also Harley's informant for American affairs. In letters Penn told the English leader of the likeableness of the Native Americans, the harm they received from contact with Europeans, his hope to settle a lasting peace between whites and Native Americans. Writing after a three day conference with hundreds of Native Americans, Penn sealed his message to Harley with his gift of a muff of otter fur from the Native Americans.

For Harley's information Penn also compared the colonies. Pennsylvania was forging ahead of Virginia in improvements (seeds of the North's victory in the Civil War!). It was true that Virginia and Maryland were growing faster than Pennsylvania in population, but he and his people were content. The others' growth was largely by servitude, their own, by the free.

The defense of proprietary colonies was a part of Harley's program, not for electioneering, but in the votes of Parliament. On this issue Penn advised him as a great Proprietor and spokesman of the other Proprietors. He admitted that the proprietary colonies evaded imperial regulations, but they were more progressive communities than the royal colonies. He feared for the overthrow of the Quaker regime in his own Colony; a political effort was under way to require oaths for office, which would exclude the Quaker Party from government. He feared to be made a dissenter in his own country, he told his friend. He asked Harley the Tory to intercede with his Church of England friends to use their influence upon Anglicans in Pennsylvania to oppose the move.<sup>52</sup> Pennsylvania would escape the disfranchisement of the Quaker Party, but it was the identical strategy which was to lead to the disfranchisement of the Old Settler Party of Roanoke and the ultimate overthrow of that weaker community.

North Carolina, though one of the smaller proprietary colonies, played its part in the Tory and Dissenter coalition. Harley had personal grounds for an interest in Roanoke. In 1662 when he was an infant his father Sir Edward received a letter from Dover written by Harley's grandfather Sir Robert, who was bound for the West Indies. It was our earliest news of the prospective establishment of the Colonies of Carolina, four months before the granting of the charter, while the friends of Charles II were still requesting this boon. Grandfather Harley had been invited to be the first proprietary Governor of Roanoke.

I should acquaint you that the Duke of Albemarle told me that he with some others were takeing out a patent from the King to settle a plantation [colony] in the West Indies, on that part which adjoynes to Virginia next to Florida, and, as I take it, is upon the river of Roanocque . . . Some fewe English here planted upon it . . .

Father to son discussed the proposal: The spot was central, on the trade route between the northern colonies and the Caribbean; the projectors promised to send in 3000 settlers; but he doubted if they would lay out enough money; and there was danger of war with the Spanish and Native Americans. He asked his son, Harley's father, to enquire further, and to let him know the proposal and the specific place. He also requested

. . . that you would give the General thanks for offering the government and whole management of the affayre and place unto me.<sup>53</sup>

The letter shows that the Harleys were close to the Proprietors of Carolina for three generations. It suggests that the Proprietors considered the radical Dissenter, his connections with the most extreme sects, a suitable candidate for Governor of the strange, sensitive community at Roanoke. Judging from the work of Robert Harley the younger for a pluralistic empire, the settlers of Roanoke might have been right well pleased with Robert Harley the elder as successor to Nathaniel Batts.

Harley's political defense of the Carolinas as proprietary colonies closely bound to leaders of his party was expressed in *Party-Tyranny*, one of the political tracts written by Daniel Defoe as secret agent of Harley and his coalition. It was a defense of the political parties in the



Carolinas which supported the Proprietors against the local parties for royal government or normalized social order. In South Carolina (until 1700) this meant the Dissenter Party, which favored full religious toleration under the *Fundamental Constitutions* and the fur trade rather than the slave trade. In North Carolina it meant the Old Settlers Party. Cited already as evidence of Roanoke's settlement prior to the Colony, Defoe uses the assertion of Roanoke's original independence to argue that a self-constituted community could not be made a royal colony against its will, that there were settlers rights as well as Proprietors' rights against charter revocation in the case of North Carolina: "There were Inhabitants in Carolina before the Grant made to the present Proprietors which Inhabitants had a Right both to the Government as well as Possession; which King Charles the Second, neither did, nor cou'd grant by Charter, or otherwise to any Body."<sup>54</sup> In accord with Defoe's position as a secret agent, the passage appears to put down the Proprietors, when actually it lends them another argument against the imposition of royal government. Like the toleration provisions in the *Fundamental Constitutions*, the two-governor proposal for Roanoke autonomy, permissive inaction, and supportive actions, Defoe's passage combines self-interest, sophisticated and unconventional thinking, and a substantive impact that is humanitarian, on behalf of the Proprietors, in alliance with Stuart and Tory politics.

John Archdale of Roanoke as a Proprietor and a Quaker worked with Penn and Harley in support of the New Tory coalition, for the charters against the Whig commercial interest, for toleration in England and America, in Roanoke of a social as well as religious variety, for a European peace in the New World as in the Old, and against the basing of the colonial economies upon servitude. In these respects a trans-Atlantic relation of political parties is evident. Archdale wrote a companion volume, a description of Carolina, for Defoe's *Party-Tyranny*, and appears to have been a principal source for the latter work. The greatest public contribution of the Roanoke Quaker Proprietor to Harley's coalition was in the English Parliamentary elections. John Archdale was the first member of the Society of Friends to be elected to the English Parliament. It was a plan well worked-out by Archdale, Penn and Harley, and was carried out to full success. Archdale ran upon the Harleian political platform, and as a member of the controversial Quaker persuasion. He was elected. When his time came to advance to the bar of the House of Commons to be admitted, he refused the oath of office on grounds of conscience and the requirements of his church, and was rejected from membership in the House. A new election was ordered. Now Archdale's son ran as the Tory candidate, his father campaigning for him, and was elected. Not formally a Friend, young

Archdale took the oath and was seated in Parliament as a valued member of the New Tory Party. In this course of events all gained—except the Whigs. The society of Friends was gratified at this challenge to the imposition of oaths upon those whose consciences forbade the practice. People of England were acquainted with the tactic that some sought to use to unseat the majority party in Pennsylvania, and that would be used to that end in North Carolina. The hearts of radical Dissenters warmed towards the Party of Harley. Conservative Tories saw the uses of Harley's wooing of the Dissenters. Proprietors and Roanoke breathed easier in their autonomy. And Harley presented the Tory Party as the party of freedom, while discomforting the Whigs, who had claimed that honor but could not offer full freedom to moderate Dissenters, much less such radicals as Quakers. Wrote Penn to Harley:

I am very glad to hear my friend Archdale's affair ended so well, which I am sure was much owing to thy prudence, kindness and interest, and must have been a great motive to his son's success . . . But thy troubles [efforts] must not end here . . .

Then, having spoken of Archdale the Proprietor and adopted North Carolinian, he made the transition from English to American politics. "Pray be a friend to the absent, and, without vanity, the meritorious." He asked only that Americans enjoy the rights of Englishmen to govern themselves, not be subjected to laws, courts and juries other than those of their own choosing. He feared that the Americans of the proprietary colonies had been tantalized with liberty while they suffered the pains of cultivating the wilderness, only to have their liberty overthrown now that they and England were beginning to reap the benefits of that toil. He informed Harley that he had reason to believe that plans were afoot in the House of Commons for persecution. In America he saw a few mercenary clergymen of the Church of England working with the gentry to build a party against the proprietary charters. And he called upon Harley and his Party in Parliament to moderate the Church of England against its use in this imperial scheme. and to win the gentry to the defense of the old chartered rights.<sup>55</sup>

Thus from the 1670s (or earlier) to the 1710s the Old Settler Party of North Carolina, its purpose to defend the Roanoke social order, was an American ally of English Parliamentary Parties, first the Court Party of the House of Stuart, through Shaftesbury and others of the original Proprietors. With realignment in England, the ally became the New Tory Party of Harley and Penn, through Archdale, the link not only the



issue of proprietary government, but other issues also, notably radical toleration. Roanoke had friends abroad, and never swerved from this "Foreign Policy." The overseas connections explain why the insufferably independent regime of Roanoke and its distinctive social order so despised by plantation colonies and English commerce were not swept aside, crushed like a fly, long before. The final overthrow of the Roanoke social order occurred in the same year as the final overthrow of the Tory Party in England. In the last decade of the seventeenth and the first decade of the eighteenth centuries the Harleian coalition and program had developed and grown stronger. Tories and Whigs were so evenly divided in Parliament or so loosely organized that majority control swung back and forth. It was not until the years 1710 and 1714 that Harley was chief of government in the Parliament. But the last great attack upon the Old Settlers Party in North Carolina, the disfranchisement of which Penn had warned, had begun in 1704 and reached crisis proportions in 1708 during the English Whig regime known as The Junto. In 1711 the military forces of Roanoke were defeated, the leaders of the Old Settler Party dispersed. A year was too short a time for Harley to succor the beleaguered community, almost too short a time for communication across the Atlantic. In that same year of the defeat of the Roanoke community the Tuscarora War began in North Carolina; three years later the Tuscaroras, friends and political allies of the Roanoke community, were defeated and exiled. The old North Carolina was no more. In the year the War ended, 1714, the Harley Ministry fell, and Harley's friend Queen Anne died. The rise of the Harley coalition and its challenge to the Whigs, to the commercial interest in general and the anti-proprietary interest in particular, had been Roanoke's defense. But the Party of Harley, Penn and Archdale had come to power too late and lasted too briefly to save Roanoke from its final destruction, by armed force from Virginia and South Carolina, acting in accord with the detestation held for Roanoke by plantation colonies and English commerce.<sup>56</sup>

The fall of the Harley Ministry was not simply a change of party administrations. In effect it was a political revolution more profound than the better-known "Glorious Revolution." After the revolution of 1688, the expulsion of the House of Stuart, a political opposition to the Whigs had remained. But after the fall of Harley the English government became a one-party system. It was the end of a chapter in English political history, the beginning of its most famous chapter, the Whig Ascendancy. "Queen Anne is dead" became a proverb in England, meaning that times have changed, old ways are gone, and there is no use in crying over their loss. The new royal House of Hanover was committed to passivity under Whig parliamentary government. The

commercial interest was now without challenge, and among its purposes were the revocation of proprietary charters, the regularization of the colonial system, the promotion of the slave trade, and the assuring that the colonies produced cash crops for the enrichment of the English commercial empire.

There was no more Tory Party save as an ineffective, dwindling sentiment. The political revolution of 1714 was not created and consolidated by force, but by circumstances favorable to the Whigs and by that Party's unprecedented use of ruthless political methods to maintain their power. An opposition could not survive the House of Hanover's support for the Whigs, the end of the peace issue, England's commercial success, the seditious conspiracies and treasonable uprisings of the Jacobites, the systematic exaggeration of the Jacobite threat by the Whigs, and the Whig leader Robert Walpole's full development of patronage as a political weapon. There would be no Parliamentary opposition in England for over half a century.

The Lords Proprietors of Carolina soon saw that their political support was crushed. It is unlikely that the finality of the change for North Carolina was understood by the dispersed Old Settler Party, by the Tuscaroras in hiding or exile, by Blackbeard, or Pompey with his mysterious stratagems, or the Palmers and Quashey with their abolitionist supporters, or by the colored fugitives who continued to seek Roanoke for a while. But there could be no return to power of Harley, no renewed support from Archdale, for the restoration of the Roanoke community. The historic alternative to the slavery plantation system had ended. In North Carolina as in England, "Queen Ann was dead."

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1886-1890), vol. 1, pp. 183-87 (hereafter cited as *CRNC*).

<sup>2</sup> Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series. Sub-series: *North Carolina Higher Court Records*, 3



vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1968–1974), vol. 2 (sub-series vol. 1) p. xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Lords Proprietors to Government of North Carolina (1676), "Instructions Given by Us the Lords Proprietors of Carolina unto the Governor and Council of that Parte of Our Province Called Albemarle (1676)"; "The Case between Thomas Miller Collector of His Majts Customes & Capt. Zachariah Gilham (1680)," in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 228–29, 231, 286–87.

<sup>4</sup> "Representation to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina Concerning the Rebellion in that Country, to be Made Use of in Further Examinations (1679)," *CRNC*, Vol. 1, p. 256.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Carteret to the Lords Proprietors (1674), In William S. Powell, ed., *Ye Countie of Albemarle in Carolina: A Collection of Documents, 1664–1675* (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1958), pp. xxxi–xxxii, 64.

<sup>6</sup> George Chalmers, "Political Annals of the Province of Carolina," in Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1836), p. 308; Samuel A'Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1908. Reprinted Raleigh, N.C.: n.p., 1925) vol. 1, p. 117; R. D. W. Connor, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), pp. 52–63; Charles Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934–1938), vol. 3, pp. 253–54, 256–57; Wesley Frank Craven, *The Colonies in Transition, 1660–1713* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> "The Affidavit of Timothy Biggs (1679)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> Mattie Erma Parker, "Legal Aspects of 'Culpeper's Rebellion'," *North Carolina Historical Review* 45 (April 1968), pp. 171–19. 111n; Parker, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, vol. 2 (sub-series vol. 1) p. xxx–xxxii, lii.

<sup>9</sup> Parker, "'Culpeper's Rebellion'," pp. 112, 112n. The quotation marks around the usually given name of this event, in conjunction with the author's criticism of the name, may be taken as a precursor of the decision to provide another name in the present study.

<sup>10</sup> Parker, *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series, vol. 2 (sub-series vol. 1) pp. 3, 8, 16, 450; Elizabeth McPherson, "Nathaniel Batts, Landholder on Pasquotank River, 1660," *North Carolina Historical Review* 43 (January 1966): 81n. By the wife of the political leader of the community taking over an ecclesiastical function, Ann Durant probably obtained more prestige than usually adheres to this occupation, and possibly even a touch of the charismatic or spiritual associated with the last rites in the feeling of her clients. The sharing of political leadership by a professional undertaker is reminiscent of such leadership in the Black

community in later times. An ancient Southern folk tradition may be the link, whether ultimately of European or African origin.

<sup>11</sup> "Representation to the Lords Proprietors (1679)"; "The Case between Thomas Miller & Capt. Gilham (1680)," both in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 259, 288; Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812), vol. 1, p. 130; Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (London: Donaldson, 1779), vol. 1, pp. 62–63; Edward McCrady, *History of South Carolina Under the Proprietary Government* (New York: MacMillan, 1897), p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 10, note 63.

<sup>13</sup> "The Case between Thomas Miller & Capt. Gilham," p. 128; Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> "The Affidavit of Timothy Biggs (1679)"; "Affidavit of Thos. Miller (1680)," both in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 279, 292.

<sup>15</sup> "The Remonstrance of the Inhabitants Off Paspatancke to All the Rest of the County of Albemarle (1677)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 248–49.

<sup>16</sup> "Affidavit of Timothy Biggs," p. 292.

<sup>17</sup> "Representation to the Lords Proprietors," p. 261; "Affidavit of Thos. Miller," p. 283.

<sup>18</sup> "The Humble Proposals of Tymothy Biggs (1678)"; "The Affidavit of Henry Hudson (1680)," both in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 248, 272–74.

<sup>19</sup> "The Humble Peticon of Thomas Miller (1680)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 304–5; Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907), vol. 3, pp. 224–25. Also see Chapter 2, note 18.

<sup>20</sup> Chalmers, "Political Annals," p. 308; Francis L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Fayetteville, N.C.: E. J. Hale and Son, 1858), vol. 2, p. 483; Charles Lee Raper, *North Carolina: A Study in English Colonial Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh F. Rankin, *Upheaval in Albemarle: The Story of Culpeper's Rebellion, 1675–1683* (Raleigh, N.C.: Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, 1962), pp. 52, 61; Lindley S. Butler, "The Governors of Albemarle County, 1663–1689," *North Carolina Historical Review* 46 (July 1969): 295; Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 49, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Saunders, *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. xxii; Osgood, *American Colonies*, vol. 2, pp. 234–35; Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, pp. 55, 60; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 2, p. 198. But Andrews saw the anti-proprietary movement as a democratic or libertarian precursor of the revolt against England.



<sup>23</sup> Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, pp. 52–53. Connor distinguishes between the purposes of the Navigation Act and the attitudes of the Proprietors towards the regulation without directly applying his insight to relations between Proprietors and settlers.

<sup>24</sup> Proprietors to the Government of North Carolina (1680), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 284.

<sup>25</sup> Early studies which recognized that the dominant popular party was anti-royal, not anti-proprietary, but did not develop this understanding into an analytic political history were: John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina from 1584 to 1851*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), vol. 1, p. 31; Ashe, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 117; Ashe, "John Jenkins," *Biographical History of North Carolina*, 8 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1905), vol. 5, p. 186.

<sup>26</sup> Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 138; R. D. W. Connor, *North Carolina: Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth 1854–1925*, 4 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1929), vol. 1, p. 88. Whether from interpreting North Carolina in the light of other colonial politics or from the error in Connor's second book, studies which have presented the dominant party as anti-prerogative or anti-proprietary, or the opposition as a proprietary party, are: Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, pp. 252–53; Hugh T. Lefler, and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, rev. ed., 1963), pp. 37, 42; Rankin, *Upheaval in Albemarle*, p. viii; Butler "Governors of Albemarle," p. 298.

<sup>27</sup> Craven, *Colonies in Transition*, p. 157. This historian also states that the meaning of the Culpeper Revolt remains undeciphered; *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607–1689* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 410. The best summary of the continuity of the dominant party, though presented as anti-proprietary, is Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, pp. 252–53.

<sup>28</sup> "Petition of the Inhabitants of Albemarle County to the King, (1680)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 305–6.

<sup>29</sup> Craven, *Colonies in Transition*, p. 157.

<sup>30</sup> Quaker Remonstrance (1679), *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 250–52.

<sup>31</sup> "Mr. Adams to the Secretary (1708)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 686–87.

<sup>32</sup> "Mr. Urmston's Letter (1711)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 765.

<sup>33</sup> "Mr. Gordon to the Secretary (1709)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 710–11.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen B. Weeks, "John Archdale," in Ashe, *Biographical History*, vol. 1, pp. 60, 62–64; William S. Powell, *The Proprietors of Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Charter Tercentenary Commission, 1963), pp. 51–52, 55–56, 60–61; M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina. A Political History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 17–18, 33, 36–40, 85; James Dickinson, *A Journal of the Life, Travels and*

*Labors of Love* (London: n.p., 1745), p. 16; John Archdale to George Fox (1686), in Hawks, *North Carolina*, vol. 2, pp. 378–79; Ashe, "John Porter," *Biographical History*, vol. 2, p. 372.

<sup>35</sup> A study of trans-Atlantic party connections, offered as suggestive, not definitive, is Alison Gilbert Olson, *Anglo-American Politics, 1660–1775: The Relationship between Parties in England and Colonial America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). The present independent study of one colony supports her general suggestion that there were such connections, as well as her opinion that there may have been more continuity than often allowed by recent scholars. The present thesis that Roanoke and its Old Settler Party were allied with the English "Tories" is also congruent with Professor Olson's even more daring hypothesis that from Shaftesbury to Bolingbroke there was a trans-Atlantic agrarian populism in support of court and Tory interests. In the case of Roanoke however, the "populism" is of subsistence farmers, virtually squatters, not squires or yeomen.

<sup>36</sup> Louise Fargo Brown, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1933), pp. viii, 154–56, 163, 166–68.

<sup>37</sup> Olson, *Anglo-American Politics*, pp. 113, 115, 117, 139, 174; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 183.

<sup>38</sup> For the Stuart toleration strategy, Dissenter support for that House, especially by Penn, and the Dissenter plight within the Whig Party, see: Sir George Clark, *The Later Stuarts: 1660–1714*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 117, 125–26, 154; Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603–1714* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961), p. 235; Joseph E. Illick, *William Penn and the Politician: His Relations with the English Government* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 80n, 82, 95, 189–91. For an impassioned expose of Whig hypocrisy: Lucile Pinkham, *William III and the Respectable Revolution: The Part Played by William of Orange in the Revolution of 1688* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 13, 43, 236–37. For the presentation of James III as a libertarian saint, rejected by other historians: Vincent Buranelli, "William Penn and James II," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1960), vol. 104, pp. 36–40, 45–50, 53. The findings in Clark's *Later Stuarts* that support for James II by Quakers (as well as other Dissenters) was widespread, are also indicated by the observations of the family of Robert Harley, and may have contributed to his revival of the strategy as parliamentary leader. Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, April 19, 1689, and June 17, 1693, in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1894), no. 14, vol. 3, appendix part 2, pp. 437, 529.

<sup>39</sup> Alison Gilbert Olson, "William Penn, Parliament and Proprietary Government," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. series, 18 (April 1961), pp. 188, 191; I. K. Steele, "The Board of Trade, The Quakers, and Resumption of Colonial Charters, 1699–1702," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. series, 23 (October 1966), pp. 609, 612.



<sup>40</sup> J. A. Doyle, *English Colonies in America: Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1889), p. 330.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 168, 173; Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, pp. 17, 33, 40. Shaftesbury, like Archdale, was opposed to the Carolina slave trade.

<sup>42</sup> J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675–1725* (London: MacMillan, 1967), pp. xv, 129, 133–35, 140–46; Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London: MacMillan, 1967), pp. 58–64, 418.

<sup>43</sup> Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> Craven, *Colonies in Transition*, p. 258.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Walcott, Jr., *English Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 92, 156–58; Holmes, *British Politics*, pp. 185, 272–77; Dennis Rubini, *Court and Country, 1688–1702* (London: Robert Hart-Davis 1967, “first published 1968”), p. 259; W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701–1715* (London: St. Martin’s Press-MacMillan, 1970), pp. 1, 7–8, 111, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Olson, “William Penn,” pp. 184–86, 188–95; Olson, *Anglo-American Politics*, p. 102n; Illick, *William Penn*, pp. 208–9; Steele, “Board of Trade,” pp. 596–600, 607–7, 609–10, 612–13, 616–18; I. K. Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration, 1696–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 159–60.

<sup>47</sup> Plumb, *The Political Stability*, pp. 131–32, 136–37, 139 and citations in note 42; Hill, *Century of Revolution*, p. 301. See conclusion of note 38 for Harley’s early interest in James II’s Dissenter strategy.

<sup>48</sup> Angus McInnes, *Robert Harley, Puritan Politician* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), pp. 180–185, 187, 191. The Harley family had even Fifth Monarchy Men connections (p. 183)!

<sup>49</sup> William Thomas Morgan, *English Political Parties and Leaders in the Reign of Queen Anne, 1702–1710* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1920), pp. 257–60. Morgan’s expertise in Defoe’s politics was as bibliographer of British publications for Queen Anne’s period. Thomas Bateson, “The Relations of Defoe and Harley,” *English Historical Review* 15 (April 1900): 247; Daniel Defoe to Robert Harley, April 29, 1712, in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports* (1899), *Portland* (papers), vol. 5, p. 166.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Lechmere to Robert Harley, November 20, 1707; Charles Cholmondeley to Robert Harley, July 22, 1710, in *Ibid.* (1897), no. 15, vol. 4, appendix part 4, pp. 461, 551.

<sup>51</sup> William Penn to Robert Harley, September 8, 1706, in *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>52</sup> Penn to Harley, ca. 1701, and February 9, 1703, in *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 79.

<sup>53</sup> Sir Robert Harley to Sir Edward Harley, November 3, 1662, in *Ibid.*, (1894), no. 14, vol. 3, appendix part 2, pp. 267–68.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Defoe, "Party Tyranny (1705)," in Alexander S. Salley, Jr., ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650–1708* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 228.

<sup>55</sup> John Archdale, "A New Description of That Fertile and Pleasant Province of Carolina (1707)," in Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina* (New York: Harper, 1846), vol. 2, pp. 85–120; Penn to Harley, January 30, 1699, in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Reports* (1894), no. 14, vol. 3, appendix part 2, p. 602.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 7, notes 20–31.



## Chapter 7

### Queen Anne Dead and Gone: The Fall of the Roanoke Community, 1708–1714

Between the Durant Uprising of 1677 and the beginning of the final crisis in 1704 Roanoke continued upon her course, largely self-governed, paying the quitrents, undisturbed by Proprietors, unheeding of English authority, cooperating with sympathetic governors and removing those who were incompatible,<sup>1</sup> receiving new fugitives, and enjoying its isolation and distinctive way of life. In 1701 the Church of England was established as the state church for the first time in North Carolina. Perhaps for a little space the Old Settler Party could not command a majority in the Assembly, or perhaps the old settlers permitted passage as an act of good will towards England, secure in their own strength and sure that tithes could never be collected. The act meant an official recognition of England's state church, and the legal right of vestries to levy taxes upon the population, including the non-Anglican majority, for the support of Anglican churches. It did not mean any retreat from the full toleration of the *Fundamental Constitutions*. Vestries made gestures towards enacting the tax,<sup>2</sup> but the Church of England in the Colony remained largely a paper organization, without funds to build or repair churches or to employ ministers. Failure in the administration of the act was an irritation to the few ardent Anglicans and its passage may have been the same for some quakers and Quakers, but the establishment of the church and the tax issue were not central to the political controversy which concluded the history of Roanoke.

In 1704 the final crisis began in Roanoke, parallel to a political crisis in South Carolina. In the latter Colony, the opponents of the Dissenter Party obtained a governor's order requiring that Assemblymen

take communion with the Church of England, or else prove that they were non-communicating (religiously feeble) Anglicans. The Proprietors were evenly divided on the act, the Archdale connection of course opposed, but the English House of Lords declared it void as a violation of civil liberty.<sup>3</sup> It may be noted that the Harleian Tory coalition was stronger in Lords than in Commons, judging from the commercial interest's preference for the latter House in introducing their bills against proprietary charters.

The purpose, to remove a dominant party from the Assembly, was the same in North as in South Carolina, but the form was different. Here was applied the weapon which Penn had predicted for Pennsylvania, a requirement of oaths. Anglican communion could not be the test to purge the North Carolina Assembly; Anglicans were too few, and the dominant party to be removed was not composed of Dissenters in general but of Quakers and the unchurched. Some historians have thought that there must have been an Anglican Establishment issue as well, that somehow this must have been lost in the record, with an inordinate emphasis upon the issue of oaths. Otherwise why would other Dissenters support the Quakers? This error was the result of assuming that there was a Dissenter community in North Carolina apart from the Quakers, forgetting that most of the settlers were unchurched.<sup>4</sup> The oath issue at Roanoke was not religious or ecclesiastical. It was narrowly political. The opposition could not win elections against the Old Settler Party. So it excluded those who were elected.

Under the Governor's edict of 1704, requiring oaths for all offices, the Quaker leaders of the Old Settlers Party were expelled from the Assembly, the Council and the courts.<sup>5</sup> This remained the intensifying political conflict between 1704 and 1711. If Quakers were to be ineligible for office, the dominant Party was deprived of its leadership as well as its representation. Judging from the importance which both parties attached to this issue, the Old Settlers Party could not continue to win elections and to hold on to power without their customary, experienced, trusted, disciplined and well-organized leaders.

The Lords Proprietors had never given up their no-oath provision of the *Fundamental Constitutions*, reaffirming it as an independent order in 1679 when the non-religious provisions of the Constitutions were waning.<sup>6</sup> So upon application from the Old Settlers Party, the Proprietors now removed the Governor who had expelled the Quakers and replaced him with Thomas Cary. But Cary imposed the oaths again; again the old settlers protested; and again the Proprietors removed the Governor, this time inviting the Assembly of Old Settler delegates as elected to choose their own Governor. They chose William Glover, who



for the third time imposed the oaths! That three Governors in a row would overthrow the constitution of the Colony and oust the delegates of the dominant Party against the objections of Assembly and Proprietors is the most extreme example in Roanoke history of the subversive role adhering to the governor's office in the proprietary Colony, and suggests that powerful inducements were offered to these appointed officials behind the backs of the Proprietors by those who wished to see a different kind of North Carolina.

Still armed with the Proprietors' permission to choose their own Governor, the Assembly removed Glover and returned to Thomas Cary, from whom they now obtained sufficient assurances. In Cary's case, when he had imposed the oaths, improper inducements if any may have been compounded by ignorance of the situation. He should have known better, as son-in-law or stepson of Archdale.<sup>7</sup> Henceforth however Cary became the resolute leader of the Old Settler Party and Roanoke community, loyal in danger and defeat as well as in his initial power.

Governor Glover refused to recognize his removal from office, and organized a government without sanction of freely elected Assembly or Proprietors. In 1708 both Governors, Glover and Cary, issued writs of election and two Assemblies were elected, one requiring the oath and filled with opponents of the Old Settler Party, the other as of old without any such requirement and with an Old Settler majority. The procedure of the opponents of the old regime was to offer the oath to the winner in a district, then when he could not take it, seat the candidate who had been defeated in the election but who could take the oath.<sup>8</sup> Essentially the Cary government was the Assembly of the elected, the Glover government the Assembly of the defeated.

The name Cary Rebellion is generally given for the period 1708–1711 in North Carolina, but like Culpeper Rebellion the term is misleading. However loyal a leader Cary became, he was coopted into the movement rather than its instigator or organizer. Nor, like the crisis of 1677, was it any rebellion against Assembly, Proprietors or authorized Governor. In other respects it was very much like the crisis of thirty years before, led by the same Party, and against proponents of English authority, in one case the collection of the customs, in the other the imposition of the alleged English requirement of swearing allegiance to the monarch. The events of 1708 to 1711 were once called the Quaker Rebellion or Quaker War, in now unknown ephemeral speeches or writings, perhaps to embarrass the Society of Friends in its pacifist principle. But Quaker Uprising is a good name for the occurrence, if Quaker in the name be taken to refer to the quakers, who did the fighting. The Quakers were the political leaders; there is no evidence that they fought, except for a few who broke discipline and

were later censured by their Quaker Meeting.<sup>9</sup> The name for the uprising is appropriate because between the Durant Uprising and the Quaker Uprising the Friends had become the leaders of the Old Settlers Party, the political arm of the Roanoke community.

The old settler government being in the ascendancy with Cary as Governor, Glover fled to Virginia for protection. Both sides armed and were prepared to take the field, but the opposition to the Roanoke community bided its time. For two years the Uprising was an armed truce, old settler neighborhoods on the alert, opponents of the old regime fortified in their centers, the truce apparently broken by occasional clashes in the effort to exercise or deny authority. In 1710 there appeared one Edward Hyde in Virginia, who claimed to be the new Governor of North Carolina appointed by the Proprietors, but had no credentials with him. Virginia's Governor Spotswood recognized his claim, but the old settler government believed him to be an impostor or else appointed by an authority other than the Proprietors. Hyde himself it seems feared that the Old Settler Party was undermining his position in England, and for a while remained in Virginia under Spotswood's protection. Justification for doubts of Hyde's status may be shown in the failure of the Proprietors' sanction to arrive in North Carolina until 1712, a year after the final overthrow of the Old Settler Party and government. <sup>10</sup>

At last Hyde, evading the old settler forces, joined the opposition inside North Carolina. Their Colonial Council, Old Settler representatives excluded, recognized him as Governor, and convened their Assembly, again without representation of the Old Settler Party.<sup>10</sup> Governor Cary and the Old Settler Assembly protested, but the opposition proceeded to enact extreme measures, under the title "An Act for the better and more effectual preserving the Queen's peace, and the establishing a good and lasting foundation of Government in North Carolina." The last clause in the title suggests the promulgation of a constitution for the Colony, new and different from that of the past.

The act was in four sections. One provided for specific succession to the Governorship and Council in vacancies, against the prior practice of informal filling of vacancies by the majority party pending new appointments by the Proprietors. Another section shows the royalist (or English-governmental) bent of the opposition party: The common law of England was henceforth to bear sway in North Carolina, as well as all English statute laws to maintain the crown's prerogative, security and succession, all ecclesiastical laws of England, and other specified English statutes concerning trade, land and law, even though Parliament had not specified the colonies in these enactments. Thus the proposed constitutional regime would be even more under the government of



England than were the royal colonies. Another section of the act reaffirmed the requirement of oath-taking for the holding of office. And the remaining section provided fine, imprisonment, pillory or other punishment and loss of civil rights for three years for seditious language, the spreading of false reports, the writing or distributing of scurrilous libels against "the *present* government *now* lawfully established" (italics provided), obstruction of an officer, the instigation of others, meeting together to *suggest* conspiracy, unlawful feuds or differences, malicious contriving of the disturbance of the peace, and concealment of knowledge of any *of* the acts named on the part of others.<sup>11</sup> These provisions are a studied extension of normal English laws, and the entire document is an act of revolution, political and social, in the fullest sense of the word.

The act was followed by orders for the arrest of the old settler leadership. Governor Cary was captured, and impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors, but escaped. Now that the intent of the opposition government was so clear, there was no choice for the Roanoke community but aggressive self-defense. Cary then became "an open and declared rebel and brought together a gang of tramps and rioters," or, from another version, Cary "was joined by certain Quakers . . . together with a rabble of the looser sort of people." A "curious party," one historian wisely comments. It was the old settlers of Roanoke, quakers and Quakers, defending their regime and society as they had from the beginning.

The North Carolina government of the Roanoke community demanded the dissolution of the unrepresentative Assembly, and the repeal of the revolutionary laws. There were no negotiations.<sup>12</sup> Governor Cary met with the Quaker missionary of the day and held much discourse on matters of government, receiving from the latter information on methods used in other colonies to frustrate the impact of suppressive laws.<sup>13</sup> A ship arrived with arms for Roanoke, including cannon; in charge was Richard Roach, sent over as Deputy for Proprietor Danson, Archdale's son-in-law. Roach announced that Hyde had not been appointed Governor by the Proprietors, then enlisted in the army of Roanoke, becoming a valued commanding officer during the fighting. Another lieutenant to Governor Cary during the war was John Porter, Senior, another of the Archdale Proprietors. Porter had been in the struggle against the conventional colonial system for a very long time; in 1663 he had been expelled from the Assembly of Virginia as delegate from the Dismal Swamp County of Norfolk for his refusal to take the oath of office, though his persuasion was Baptist rather than Quaker. Other leaders of the war connected to Archdale were Emmanuel Lowe, his son-in-law, a Quaker Colonel later disciplined by his

Meeting, and Archdale's grandson, Nevil Lowe, who after the defeat was arrested in Virginia while endeavoring to escape.<sup>14</sup>

The Quaker Uprising, which had begun in 1708, became a war during several months in the late spring and early summer of 1711, following upon the arrival of Roach's aid. The first battles were naval. On such terrain land operations are not likely to be quickly decisive, and for viability any regime needed access to Roanoke Sound. The first military move of the Roanoke government was the establishment of a fort, armed with the cannon Roach had brought. While the Roanoke settlers were busying themselves with preparation of an inland fleet, the enemy attacked. They were driven off from the fort, and the boats in progress were saved. Two large but shallow ships, a brigantine and a barco longo, were transformed into war ships. Six cannon were placed upon the former. The latter became the flagship of Roanoke, with a banner signifying the community upon her mast. Other smaller craft were assembled and prepared for duty,<sup>15</sup> doubtless the great dugouts for which the settlers were famous.

The navy of Roanoke was African American. The Council of Virginia, in advising Governor Spotswood to mobilize his militia, reported:

that the insurgents would probably endeavor to seduce their negroes, some of those, in the frontier counties, having been already carried away, to be employed on board of the armed vessel . . .<sup>16</sup>

↑  
treatment  
of  
slave  
negroes

The terms "seduced" and "carried away," applied to fugitive slaves, were to be commonly used for another century and a half of slavery, and another century of works sympathetic to slavery, to imply that slaves would never seek freedom on their own. The Council of Virginia feared that news of the Quaker Uprising would have a "bad influence . . . on this Colony by encouraging the servants and negroes and other persons of desperate fortunes to run from hence in hope of protection from the party in arms there . . .," that is, "Quakers . . . together with a rabble."<sup>17</sup>

Why the Roanoke command assigned African Americans to the ships in particular may be related to the reputation of Black people, free and enslaved, as pilots (such as Andover), pirates and sailors. Presumably others besides the Black crews were on the boats, but as additional fighters, not sailors. It was a formidable fleet, with a complement of sixty to eighty on the brigantine alone. The settler and new fugitive navy commanded Roanoke Sound: no entry or exit for the



supporters of the opposition forces. Rash was the enemy who remained living or camped near the shore, within reach of the naval patrol of the Roanoke community.

In the meantime, however, the opposition government headed by Hyde had also built a fort as its headquarters, on the shore and also armed with cannon. The Roanoke fleet now proceeded to this point, the last contact of the enemy with the Sound. It was an artillery battle, between brigantine and fort. The ship was unscathed, and at last scored hits upon the roof of the fort. Perhaps overestimating the damage, which was actually slight, the Roanoke forces landed and stormed the fort without cover. The direct fire from within drove them back to their boats. Now a cannon ball of the enemy struck the mast of the brigantine, and the fleet beat a retreat into the Sound. The enemy forces pursued in their own boats. Possibly slowed by the damage, though the mast was not dismantled, the brigantine was overtaken. The settlers beached their ship, and with the complements of the other hosts retreated into the woods.

The situation was now reversed. The Roanoke fleet was in the hands of their enemy, and the settlers were upon the defensive. The Roanoke forces now deliberately dispersed into smaller units, for defense. to raise more of the community, and to engage in guerrilla warfare. A toehold was kept upon Roanoke Sound, where Richard Roach established himself upon an island and called in settlers from the adjoining shore. With the captured fleet the enemy attacked the outpost, but the island was too strongly fortified and the Hyde forces were defeated.<sup>18</sup>

At first the principal Roanoke band, under Governor Cary, established camp in deep swamps at the western end of the Sound, near the center of the ~~Tuscarora~~ Confederacy. From there the Governor and his force made their way southeast, gathering recruits. At Pamlico the government of Roanoke was re-assembled. Hyde with a force of eighty that grew to a hundred and fifty men struggled along a river leading from the Sound to Cary's military capital, but the terrain was so difficult that they were forced to abandon their cannon. Cary, receiving word of the approaching soldiers who outnumbered his, abandoned the Pamlico fort and retreated farther into the wilderness, where the Roanoke soldiers built another fort. Somehow they were able to get their own five cannon to the new location. It is not unlikely that the Roanoke soldiers, who lived near the Great Dismal Swamp, were better travelers in the wetlands than the forces of Hyde, among whom were new settlers from the dryer region in the south of the Colony. The enemy followed Cary, but upon seeing how well fortified and armed

was the new position of the old settlers, Hyde and party abandoned their offensive and returned up country, to Roanoke Sound.<sup>19</sup>

It was a stalemate. The old settlers had lost control of Roanoke Sound and the mouths of the rivers, essential for contact with the outside world. But Hyde's army was unable to dislodge the Roanoke forces from the country away from the Sound, whence the latter continued guerrilla raids against their enemy. Governor Cary and the army of the Roanoke community were in a position to maintain themselves for a long time, prevent the other government from consolidating its regime, and await political help from the Proprietors and the Harley government.

The overthrow of the old North Carolina government and the social order of Roanoke was not by the internal opposition of the Colony, but by the power of the Empire: namely Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia and the Royal Marines.

Spotswood first intervened by an offer of mediation to Cary and Hyde. The former was assured of his impartiality and required to disarm first; the latter was not.<sup>20</sup> With Hyde's law standing, and the charges against the old settler leaders, they could not disarm prior to mediation. Upon Cary's refusal, a second letter from Spotswood was handed him, an ultimatum, not an offer of conciliation:

... I do not design to stand idle and see so near me her Majesty's subjects misled into unhappy distractions her peace and authority tumultuously trampled on, and the Tranquility of this Government endangered by your wild commotions; what are you out of your wits to dispute whether Mr Hyde be sent over to be your Governor? Surely you will not persist to give occasion to the spilling of more blood in so unjustifiable a contention! If your confidence in a superior force at this time encourages you to keep up those tumults, yet think that the evil day of account for such bad actions cannot be far off, and consider what severe penaltys are due to the author of a commotion which may fairly come under the denomination of a Rebellion. I'm informed your design is to seize Mr Hyde with all his Council, but be assured that I am so well satisfyed with the legal Authority he is vested with and have such an awful Reverence for that family which he has the honour to be related to, that so long as I have any power at hand I shall not suffer him to ly imprisoned by a Plebeian Route [rout]; once more I offer you my mediation for peace. Think what miserys



you involve your Country in, and what coals of fire you heap upon your head by refusing it.<sup>21</sup>

Whereupon the Hyde government requested military aid from Virginia. Spotswood obtained sanction from his government to mobilize and send in the Virginia militia, but upon opposition from the Dismal Swamp counties on the border, he hit upon the solution of acting in his capacity as a royal officer to dispatch English forces. A warship was sent, with a contingent of Royal Marines. There is no information on reprisals, or the reduction of old settler forts. The Marines, marching through the Colony, overawed the civilian population, demonstrated the power available to the new regime, and scattered the active element o' the old settler community. Leaders of the Roanoke government, settlers in arms and others important to the community's existence fled into other colonies, or the deepest wilderness sanctuaries of North Carolina. Governor Cary and others were captured in Virginia and sent to England; it is doubtful that those referred to the English courts or with prominent English connections were ever punished. The fate of most who fled is unknown. The old regime was out, the new one in.<sup>22</sup> Receiving word at last of the violent phase of the conflict and Virginia's intervention, the Proprietors chided Hyde, "... we are very sorry that you was compelled to make use of violent measures towards the support of the Government," and urged that no reprisals be taken. It was too late by nearly a year.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately after his invasion of Roanoke, Spotswood put in his bid with English friend, to build up his personal empire: Since North Carolina had been the sanctuary for runaways, since there was a total absence of religion, since Quakers had been numerous and in government, and since there it was considered lawful to overthrow governors, therefore to turn anarchy into government, he suggested, let North Carolina become a trusteeship of Virginia, with the governor commissioned by the crown, and vacancies filled by the Governor of Virginia.<sup>24</sup>

What were the motives of those who overthrew the Roanoke community? Spotswood's ambition was one, but this was wedded to his politics. Though an Old Tory (not Harleian) on other issues, he was an ardent imperialist, and had been appointed by an English Whig government. He was the rare colonial servant of that day who frequently and at length corresponded with the Board of Trade and Plantations, seeking to integrate his work with the broader scheme of empire. He was also colonial Virginia's most energetic Governor in the encouragement of frontier expansion and economic progress,<sup>25</sup> and in

the removal of obstacles to these, piracy and the Tuscarora power as well as the Roanoke community.

Spotswood's assumption of leadership against Roanoke was sanctioned by the government of his Colony; Virginia's half-century feud with North Carolina, boundary dispute, fear of competition, fugitives real and alleged, was another factor, background if not cause of the overthrow. This in turn had been intensified by the old and increasing imperial campaign to revoke proprietary charters, another factor behind the crushing of the Roanoke community.

Another cause, more internal to the Colony, was the discontent of persons who sought to obtain secure land titles for speculation or the building up of plantations. The law enacted in 1711 by Hyde's insurgent government, which illegally established a new constitution for the Colony and savagely suppressed dissent, was accompanied by a land law. It charged that the old regime had been negligent as well as corrupt in land administration, and called for the registration of all tracts claimed, the prompt issuing of titles, and their proper surveying. The guilty land agent of the Roanoke government had been Edward Moseley, an important young acquisition to the leadership of the Old Settler Party and probably its only Anglican gentleman. At the beginning of the Colony the Party had openly legislated measures to discourage real estate development; it appears that this bias of the Roanoke community had continued, in the form of unenthusiastic administration of land sales. The law of 1711 shows that colonists who did wish a normal and effective system of landholding, or planters who wished to immigrate from more populated colonies, supported the revolutionary movement against Roanoke. This interpretation is supported by the new regime's boast, in explaining itself to the Proprietors, that Moseley's confused handling of land registrations had been replaced by one who was a zealous promoter of settlement. The new government complained that several new immigrants had been forced to squat, or to move on to another colony that was more interested in the productive use of land.<sup>26</sup>

A bigoted devotion to the Church of England has understandably been seen among the causes of the crisis,<sup>27</sup> but the focus of struggle was not the general extension of the authority of that church as in other colonies, but the specific issue of oaths as a means of removing the dominant party from office. The most that can be said for an Anglican factor in colonial North Carolina's revolution is that effective establishment of the Church of England was a plank in the platform of the rebels, as part of their general bias towards English imperial interests, and perhaps out of the conviction that a church establishment promoted social order,<sup>28</sup> and also that what few ardent and intolerant



Anglicans existed in North Carolina were likely to join the imperialist rebellion.

✓ Another factor that probably did play a significant part in energizing opposition to the Roanoke community was the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702–1713, with Spanish Florida not far away and Spanish fleets too often along the coast. Spanish and French ships plundered South Carolina and raided farther north.<sup>29</sup> What had been a potential problem was now real: a weak, even unreliable Colony near active enemies of England in Florida and the Caribbean.

One other likely internal cause of the war upon Roanoke, and perhaps the most essential, was south of Albemarle Sound, the small but steady growth of an immigrant population of the conventional kind, planters with their servants and small farmers who wished to become planters. Such growth was not pronounced until after the destruction of the Roanoke community, but it had begun at the end of the seventeenth century, and may have amounted to a thousand persons by the beginning of the Quaker Uprising. These settlers seeking to raise a cash crop were few, but there had been no such community at all a decade or so before. Not many were needed for the rebellion, when the population of the Roanoke community was only several thousand. New settlers of the ambitious sort sufficient to provide two or three hundred militia for the new regime were enough to hold off the militia of Roanoke and to give Spotswood time and excuse to intervene. Very importantly, these new settlers had immediate grievances too. Upon settlement they had been promised assistance by the Colony in obtaining an Anglican minister, and in establishing conventional English law in their district. They had received neither, they protested just before the development of Roanoke's final crisis.<sup>30</sup> There is nothing unreasonable in believing that Roanoke grinned, shrugged and walked away from these complaints. The directing of the new settlers' protest to the English government is more evidence of the imperial character of the opposition.

✓ (Spotswood's genius, Virginia's ancient enmity, the campaign against proprietary colonies, the frustration of planters, the zeal of a few Anglicans, the security needs of the European war, and the emergence of a small but real new settler interest, combined within the far greater framework of an imperial commerce and the imminent transformation of English politics.) English political pluralism, first the Stuart court party, then the New Toryism in opposition to Whigs had been a safeguard against a united, systematic and determined extirpation of the anomalous Roanoke community. Chronic criticisms had gone astray; the great effort of 1677 had failed. But Harley's government came to power too late and fell too soon and completely to permit the Proprietors to rescue the Old Settlers Party in the Quaker Uprising as

they had vindicated that Party after Durant's Uprising. There were no more powerful allies in England for deviant societies such as Roanoke and the Bahamas.

Of course the relationship between the local crisis and the empire-wide revolution was not mechanical. Nor need a conspiracy be sought for. With the Whig Ascendancy and the dominance of commerce, the last irregular colonies would have to conform, a little before, a little after.

Neither should the overthrow of Roanoke be viewed as the action of England against Americans. It was American forces that bore upon Roanoke to destroy her, forces who favored the imperial design because they too in their smaller way supported the great commercial and plantation structure. As Charles Andrews pointed out, pro-empire parties grew in every colony, motivated partly by commercial interest, partly for the rights (the present author says benefits) of Englishmen denied them by the Proprietors, partly for security from Spanish and French attack, partly for good order within, security from discordant communities. Many of this party were selfish or ambitious in the personal sense. More had the broader political vision that decentralization had been a liability for the ends they valued.<sup>31</sup>

If the Roanoke community be viewed as a haven for the oppressed of plantation society, then its dependence for security upon the balance of English political power and its extinction upon a change in that balance may feed cynicism. The small are helpless in a world of great and impersonal forces. But there is another view. The alliance with Proprietors and other English political interests was not the only reason the Roanoke community, independent and autonomous, maintained its existence for over sixty years. There was the initiative of the first settlers, leading them from bondage into the unknown. There were the means of livelihood they learned to create for themselves and their children. There was the cohesiveness of the new culture and social order they built. There were the political wisdom they exercised, the risks they took, the injuries they sustained, to defend their community. If fugitive settlers in 1650 had been told by a prophet they believed that their free settlement could last no more than sixty years, would they have returned to their previous status, perished of sorrow, or gone on regardless to build their community of Roanoke?

The dispersal of the army and government of Roanoke before the Royal Marines was in July of 1711. In September the Tuscarora War began. During the two months between, the scattered and hidden old settlers could not have been sure their cause was dead, and the victory of the new regime was too recent to be enjoyed without caution. Fugitives were still being pursued.<sup>32</sup> Thus the Quaker Uprising of 1708-1711 and



the Tuscarora War of 1711–1714 were one continuous conflict chronologically. Were they also one war in substance, the defense of allied established communities against the new regime?

As Virginia entered the war of the Quaker Uprising, that Colony issued a proclamation, by Spotswood, ordering the seizure of fugitives from Roanoke and charging that the settlers

to the better Carrying on their Seditious Designs have been Discovered to hold a Traitorous Correspondence with the Tuscarora Indians whereby they have Endeavoured to Incite and stir up the said Indians (by promises of Reward) to Cutt of her Majties Good Subjects of the said Province of North Carolina that Continue obedient to the Governmt.<sup>33</sup>

To the Board of Trade Spotswood reported that Cary, still in the field, “threatens to bring down the Tuscorure Indians to his assistance,” a charge supported by

Affidavitts sent in hither to prove that Mr Porter one of Cary’s pretended Council was with the Tuscaroro Indians, endeavoring by promises of great rewards to engage them to cut off all the Inhabitants of that part of Carolina that adhered to Mr Hyde. The Indians own the proposal was accepted by their young men; but that their old men who have the greater sway in their Councils being of their own nature suspicious, that there was some trick intended them, or else directed by a superior Providence, refused to be concerned in that barbarous design.<sup>34</sup>

After the outbreak of the Tuscarora War Spotswood would not render judgment to the Board of Trade that invitation by the Roanoke government was the cause of this war, but insisted it must have encouraged the Native Americans, as well as demonstrating to them the depth of the division among the colonists. Probably thinking of the Harleian composition of the current Board of Trade, he distinguished the Roanoke Quakers with their “monstrous” doctrines from the Friends of England.<sup>35</sup> He may well not have differentiated Quakers from quakers.

During the interim between the wars Governor Hyde wrote to an English nobleman asking that John Porter be arrested if he had flown to England, for his offense in visiting the Native American towns

to bring down the Indians to cut of Man, Woman and Child on the Western Shore of Chowan [i.e., south of Albemarle Sound], that has been the only subjects to her Majesty that on all occasions expressed their loyalty . . .<sup>36</sup>

At the end of the Tuscarora War the commander of South Carolina troops who defeated the Native Americans asked their leaders if whites had incited them, and received a negative reply.<sup>37</sup> This adds little to the verification or rejection of the alleged connection between the Roanoke government and the Tuscarora War, for no Native American unless terribly subservient or cynical would admit that his government had been "incited" to a national decision of life and death. What the Native Americans considered the relationship between the two wars and the two communities to have been is another question.

✓ Among the documents cited above, it may be noted that the Virginia proclamation, Spotswood's first report, to the Board of Trade, and Hyde's letter were written before the outbreak of the Tuscarora War. If these were fabrications to rally support against the Cary government, it is a remarkable coincidence that within weeks the Tuscaroras began their unexpected attack after sixty years of peace with English settlers. When the two governors wrote of the "incitement" they were satisfied that the Native Americans had not responded, and expressed no notion of preparation for another war. There is another coincidence: Spotswood to the Board and Hyde spoke of a plan for the Tuscaroras to attack only the south of the Colony, where the new regime had its support, and this is precisely the strategy adopted by the Native Americans when the war began shortly after these reports. The biographer of Spotswood judges the Governor's comments on "Quaker" violence to have been sincere as well as politically motivated, and another colonial historian accepts the reports of negotiations between Roanoke and the Tuscarora Confederacy, judging from the specific description of the debate between old and young in the Council of the latter community.<sup>38</sup>

Only one of the earlier historians of North Carolina has clearly asserted that there was an alliance between the Native American and settler communities; he judged from the inability of the new colonial government to raise troops against the Tuscaroras in Albemarle. Herbert Osgood viewed the reports as "sinister" but found them impossible to substantiate; he concluded that Cary's "incitement" played a part among a number of causes of the war. Another historian agreed that the evidence is too slight to readily credit such a serious charge, yet the Cary party deserves moral blame for having provided the opportunity for the Tuscaroras. Charles Andrews saw the issue of the "incitement"



as unimportant, since the Tuscaroras like other Native Americans had been abused more than enough for sufficient motivation. The position of the current specialist in North Carolina history is that the Cary party tried and failed to rouse the Native Americans, yet the division in the Colony from the "Cary Rebellion" did offer opportunity for the Tuscaroras.<sup>39</sup>

Several historians have denied that Cary's party encouraged the Tuscaroras to War. Saunders, the editor of the *Colonial Records*, dismissed the charge without discussion as not subject to "serious credence," as "too gross," "too unnatural." Samuel A'Court Ashe stated, without source cited and in contradiction to the record and other historians, that the Tuscaroras attacked Albemarle as well as the southern portion of the Colony and that adherents of the Cary party vied with supporters of the Hyde government in patriotic struggle against the Indians. This same error or undocumented and counterindicated assertion was offered by Stephen Weeks. In contemplating the charge against the Cary party, Weeks grew hysterical. It is "contrary to reason," "preposterous." Not even "Quakers, atheists and deists" would incite savages against their own people.<sup>40</sup>

The explanation which comes to mind for this emotional reaction to the charge, two centuries after the event, and for Saunders's characterization of the charge as too gross and unnatural for serious credence, is that these historians were revolted at the thought of racial disloyalty. White men do not invite members of another race to join them against their fellow whites. ★

Stephen Beauregard Weeks, who pursued his career during the renewal of United States' interest in Latin American at the end of the nineteenth century, and who in his work was sympathetic to antebellum Southern filibustering expeditions to that region, was one of the many more openly racist intellectuals of his time. He eulogized the bringing of a higher civilization to Latin America because of the indolence and semi-barbarism of the mongrel races. The career of the editor of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, William Laurence Saunders, was during the years after the Civil War. His greatest achievement, according to his biographer, was as mentor of the Democratic Party of North Carolina, in whose service he never rested until Radical Reconstruction was overthrown and a "better class of whites were firmly established in power." But Saunders also contributed in the counterrevolution to the whole South as well as his own State, and in the terrorist as well as electoral sector of that revolution, as Emperor (national chief) of the Invisible Empire of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>41</sup> ✓

Despite their racial position, Weeks and Saunders should have thought twice before dismissing the charge of an alliance between Roanoke and the Tuscaroras as beyond all belief. Among the best known events in colonial history have been "the French and Indian Wars," in which French and Native American allies repeatedly warred with English and Native American allies. During the American Revolution England continued the practice of such alliances, and the new United States adopted it. It might be argued that these alliances were abnormalities of continental wars for empire, that white settlers, as distinguished from white empires, are never known to have joined with Native Americans against other white settlers. It is true that so far in the progress of historiography we know of no such alliances. But in two respects the Quaker Uprising was very different from the other conflicts among colonists that we do know. It was not a struggle of parties within the same political system, but a war between radically opposed constitutional and social systems. And the Roanoke community did not consist of settlers of the usual sort, but persons of atypical culture and social values. There is no such thing as racial disloyalty in a community that has not developed normative Anglo-Saxon American racism.

The two most telling evidences of an alliance between Roanoke and the Tuscaroras are the selective nature of the Native American attacks upon settlers, and actions by the settlers of Albemarle that weakened the war effort of the new colonial regime. The Tuscaroras did not attack the north, but the southern shore of Albemarle Sound and the new settlements on the Pamlico and Neuse Rivers, the centers of support for the new regime. These areas were devastated and the survivors huddled in hastily contrived fortifications, while the people of Albemarle throughout the war continued to live in scattered and unfortified homes as they had for sixty-five years.

As the supporters of the new regime died or faced death the people of Albemarle refused to assist the new government against the Tuscaroras and did much to frustrate the efforts of the regime. No soldiers for the Colony could be raised from the population center north of the Sound; only 130 to 140 soldiers were available from the survivors in the south, necessitating a call to Virginia for 200 men.<sup>42</sup> The Assembly voted fines upon persons who refused to fight, but agents of the government searching the north found hardly a man at home. Those who had not already fled at the end of the Quaker Uprising were now in hiding. Some Quakers pretended to be Quakers, and therefore pacifists. The Quakers themselves were using their "great influence on the common people" to prevent enlisting.<sup>43</sup>



Though the Old Settlers Party was unable to revive after the Tuscarora War without its leadership, during the War, with no time for the new government to consolidate its power, the old Party was able to elect a minority of non-Quakers to the Assembly, persons who could take the required oath. These, in consultation with the Quakers, did what they could to end the war. First they delayed the voting of mobilization and supplies for the war. Then they postponed the request of aid from Virginia. Finally they were almost able to defeat the penalty act for persons who refused to enlist. Spotswood put it this way: North Carolinians were resolved to sacrifice the Colony to their own private resentments, and because they could not introduce the most obnoxious "rebels" into the government.<sup>44</sup>

The oral history of the Tuscaroras gathered by Chief Elias Johnson after 150 years of turmoil and dislocation for the Iroquois Nations is understandably garbled. Native American cultures are not noted for the recitation of history as a sacred ritual trust as are the cultures of West Africa. Three contradictory traditions are interwoven in Chief Johnson's history: white men purporting to be Quakers visited the Tuscaroras and encouraged their enmity towards the colonial government; whites told the Tuscaroras that the settlers were squatters, not really of the Colony, and therefore there would be none to avenge them; and the alleged Quakers were actually agents of the Hyde regime, seeking by their disguise to discredit Roanoke. The first two strands of tradition appear to reflect visits from both sides in the Quaker Uprising, one reminding the Tuscaroras of their traditional friendship with the Roanoke settlers, the other offering those settlers as fair game, unprotected by England. These could be old traditions, dating back to the time of the war. The third strand appears to be later, an apology for the rumor of "Quaker incitement," perhaps from outsiders close to the Tuscaroras and sympathetic to the Society of Friends.

But another tradition Chief Johnson tells confidently, without contradictions, and repeats in two contexts. Whoever the white men were, they were unsuccessful in coming to an understanding with the Tuscarora Confederacy, but were successful with five smaller and less central nations of the Empire, the Corees, the Mattamuskeets, the Bear River Nation, and two others whose names were forgotten. These were joined, illegally, by some of the outvoted militants of the Tuscarora Nation proper.<sup>45</sup> This report introduces a new answer to the question: Was there an understanding between Roanoke and Tuscaroras? The conservative party mentioned by Spotswood was indeed successful in the debate and vote of the central Council of the Confederacy, but was defeated by the militant party in some of the separate national Councils.

When the latter began the war, the major part of the Confederacy was drawn in by attacks from the white settlers.

Besides the lesser indications, documentary and oral, and the major general evidence from the sparing of Albemarle and Albemarle's opposition to the war, there is a specific event reported that lends convincing support to the charge that Tuscaroras fought in league with Roanoke. It was pointed out by the editor of the memoirs of Baron Christoph von Graffenried, a Swiss leader of immigrants to North Carolina. The editor, against all his inclinations, his realization that all sources are hostile to Cary, and his feeling that "such a crime is hard to believe," was driven to the conclusion that there had been an understanding between the two communities, by the clearness of Graffenried's report and its logic.

Soon after the arrival of Graffenried in North Carolina with a large party of German immigrants, the Tuscarora War began with the capture of Graffenried and a companion by the Tuscaroras, followed by the general attack upon the settlers. In his memoirs the Swiss nobleman offers his opinion that the general cause of the war was injuries inflicted upon the Tuscaroras, but that the immediate cause was the Native Americans being informed by the Cary party that the Hyde regime was establishing a new, aggressive settlement policy. The Tuscaroras would be driven out of the Colony, back to the mountains. Graffenried further stated that he possessed personal positive proof that the charge against the Cary party was true. When he had been first captured, he had been badly treated. Then he learned that his captors believed him to Governor Hyde. After he had convinced them of his true identity, he was better treated, and soon released. The focus of Tuscarora enmity was Hyde; the Confederacy had noted the course of the Colony's politics, including the Quaker Uprising; the war was directed against the new regime.<sup>46</sup>

Graffenried's report that the Tuscaroras were concerned about a new settlement policy is confirmed by the new regime's land law of 1711, the year the war began, and its boast to the Proprietors of a new aggressive land officer who would encourage settlement, not discourage it as had the former land officer Edward Moseley and his Old Settler Party. Further substantiating Tuscarora sophistication in colonial politics was their seizure of John Lawson along with the supposed Governor Hyde, Graffenried. It was Lawson who was the new land officer that purposed to administer aggressively the revolutionary land policy of the new government. Graffenried the Tuscaroras released because he was not Hyde; Lawson they tortured to death, a mode of execution perhaps in part a reprisal for the same treatment of one of their number not long before by settlers in the south of the Colony.



A reasonable conclusion emerges from these pieces of evidence that have been advanced: The Governors of Virginia and North Carolina reported Roanoke involvement in Tuscarora discussion of war and military strategy before these Governors knew that war and that strategy were about to be implemented. The descriptions offered by Spotswood and by Native American tradition of the Tuscarora political process during consideration of the Roanoke proposals are rich in detail. When war came, the Tuscaroras were consistent in their avoidance of attacks upon Albemarle. At the same time the settlers of Albemarle were vigorous in their opposition to the war against the Native Americans. And the Tuscarora seizure of the new colonial land agent and the supposed new governor was politically informed, against the overthrow of Roanoke's isolationist policy, against the new government that would promote immigration and the establishment of plantations.

The conclusion is, not that Cary's agents "incited" the Native Americans, but that the Roanoke government and community and the Tuscarora Confederacy were allies in their wars against the new government of North Carolina, for the same motive, community survival. The Quaker Uprising and the Tuscarora War were one war, 1708-1714. It was the culmination in arms of the common interest which in peace had expressed itself in friendly relations and cultural interchange.

When the Tuscaroras saw the Roanoke government defeated, who had been fighting their war too, they felt it was to their national interest to launch war upon the victors, before the latter could stabilize their power. The Tuscaroras probably felt that their war would provide time for the Roanoke forces to regroup or obtain political support overseas. In return the defeated settlers of Roanoke rendered aid to the Tuscaroras, by refusing to fight, and by legislative obstruction.

Why did not Roanoke and the Confederacy conduct their segments of the war simultaneously? Perhaps there were internal political barriers to synchronization. Or perhaps the Tuscaroras stood aside at first as a strategy agreed upon jointly. The allies may have judged it unnecessary to provide the enemy with the awful charge of race collaboration, in the belief that the Roanoke community alone could hold off the puny forces of the opposition until political relief arrived. They did not consider the possibility of Spotswood's illegal invasion, for which he might have suffered later but for the Whig Ascendancy, nor could the allies foresee the permanent collapse of the Tory Party of England and the consequent end of the power and connections of the Lords Proprietors.

Moreover in view of outvoted Tuscarora militants' slipping into the armed forces of the lesser nations to fight illicitly, and the significant presence of African Americans in the armed forces of both

Roanoke and the Tuscarora Confederacy, the possibility should not be overlooked that English-speaking, European-clothed Native Americans fought in the army of Roanoke, and that darker Roanoke settlers who commanded the Tuscarora language, besides the African Americans, fought in the army of the Tuscarora Confederacy.

In September of 1711, following the capture and release of Graffenried, the execution of the land officer John Lawson, and attack upon Graffenried's German settlement at New Bern, fierce and systematic attacks immediately followed upon the other villages and plantations south of Albemarle Sound. Many of the newer settlers were killed. The war was conducted from the heartland of the Tuscaroras, in the south. These "Lower Tuscaroras" were commanded by their Emperor Hancock, paramount ruler of the whole Confederacy.

In the north, near Roanoke, Tom Blunt, paramount chief of the lesser group of towns, the "Upper Tuscaroras," took an official stand of neutrality. Certainly the Upper Tuscaroras remained friends with their neighbors, the settlers of Roanoke. But the new colonial regime charged that King Blunt's posture of neutrality had been worked out at the Council of the Confederacy when the strategies of the war were planned. The Upper Tuscaroras scrupulously avoided any kind of assistance to the new North Carolina government, no matter how much they were beseeched. Moreover King Blunt emphatically stated that he had no control over the Upper Tuscarora towns except his own, that he was paramount, but not a ruler over other chiefs. One wonders how well these kings controlled their youth.<sup>47</sup>

The new North Carolina government called upon Spotswood to help again, but due to opposition in Virginia he restricted himself to sending militia to the disputed border land. As the war developed this was of some service to the Hyde government as a safeguard against flanking movements by the Tuscaroras.<sup>48</sup>

It was South Carolina's turn to save the new regime in North Carolina. The slave trade party, which Archdale and the Proprietors had opposed, was firmly in power; it was the profits from captives in war that motivated the army which slowly and painfully made its way through the wilderness from Charleston. Most of the South Carolina force were hired Native Americans of conquered nations. The rescuers arrived at Tuscarora country in January of 1712, where they were joined by the very small North Carolina colonial force, but lost the majority of their Native American troops, who escaped from their white officers. The invaders found that the Confederacy had constructed a chain of nine forts as first line of defense. The Carolinians bypassed all but one, and took that fort after a hotly contested battle; there was ample booty, principally slaves. The troops of the Tuscarora now fell back upon their



fortified capital of Cotechny or Hancock Town, while civilians fled into hiding. Now the Carolina army moved leisurely through the Tuscarora country, destroying the fields or seizing the harvested crops and burning some 375 houses in six towns.

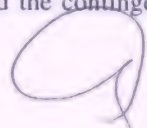
But then came wilderness country. Emperor Hancock was in personal command at his capital. The civilian town had been evacuated, but its fort was impregnable, not only from its construction, but from the dreadful morass which surrounded it, dense with thickets and thorns. In the deep swamp, where no stranger could approach, an island had been prepared and provisioned as a sanctuary; there sojourned the women, children and aged of the Nation.

As the invading army made its first approach to Fort Hancock, the soldiers were devastated by concerted and sustained firing from the fortress. The North Carolina troops broke and ran, leading to a general retreat by the entire force, with many casualties. The next day the Carolina army began a withdrawal to New Bern.

A month later, in early April, reinforced by more troops, mainly white, and supplied with artillery, the Carolinians again toiled towards Cotechny, encumbered by their cannons. At last the fortress was under siege. For ten days the Tuscaroras withstood the cannon fire, and though besieged, kept their enemy on the defensive. Said the South Carolina commanding officer, it was a continuing battle which "for variety of action, sallies, attempts to be relieved from without, can't I believe be paralleled against Indians." He could have added, "and Negroes," for there was a company of African Americans among the defenders of the fort.

Unable to put the defenders on the defensive, unable to take Fort Hancock or burn it, the Carolina commander signed a treaty of peace with the Tuscarora Confederacy on April 17, 1712, and withdrew his army from the Tuscarora Country.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the extraordinary activity of the besieged force, the cause of the Carolina defeat was the equally extraordinary skill with which the fortress at Cotechny had been designed. Its creator was Harry the engineer, one of the distinguished African Americans whose name has survived from late seventeenth and early eighteenth century North Carolina. He proposed the design to the Tuscaroras, a stockade with corner towers, protected from fire by earthen walls and surrounded by a maze of logs to delay the charge or retreat of an enemy. The fort was built under his direction. Harry the engineer had been a militant against slavery upon a North Carolina plantation, and was consequently sold into Virginia. But he had escaped and made his way home, perhaps as one of those fugitives who are reported to have joined the Quaker Uprising. It was probably he who also led the contingent of African



Americans in the defense of the fort he had built, and who upon capture was immediately cut down by the Carolinians as a dangerous Black agitator.

Describing Harry the engineer's fort, the Carolina commander reported that he

found it strong as well by situation on the river's bank as Workmanship, having a large Earthern Trench thrown up against the puncheons [palisades] with 2 teer of port holes; the lower teer they could stop at pleasure with plugs, & large limbs of trees lay confusedly about it to make the approach intricate, and all about much with large reeds and canes to run into people's legs. The Earthern work was so high it signified nothing to burn the puncheons, & it had 4 round Bastions or Flankers. . . <sup>50</sup>

By the end of Spring the treaty was violated, when the departing South Carolinians seized more Native Americans to sell as slaves. Thereupon in the Summer of 1712 the Tuscaroras again brought terror to the countryside south of Albemarle Sound. Again a South Carolina army was requested and readily granted; there was doubtlessly envy of the slave trade profits enjoyed by the first army. The force arrived in the Fall, the war raged through the winter, and in the Spring of 1713 Fort Hancock was again under siege. This time the colonials brought experts in military combustion, who succeeded in igniting the fortress at the corner towers, where the protective earthern walls, necessarily higher at these points, may have been easier to make fall, exposing the wooden palisades. The fort was taken, its defenders massacred. Fifty-seven Carolinian deaths are reported, but 900 of the Tuscarora force. Emperor Hancock was one of those who were captured and executed. The treaty of surrender was signed by King Tom Blunt of the Upper Tuscarora in the north, who had never been at war.<sup>51</sup>

In the last year of the war Tuscaroras fought on, in smaller, dispersed bands, pursued by remaining units of the South Carolina army. At the beginning of 1715 the last band still based upon their ancestral territory surrendered. A small Upper Tuscarora community remained in the north of the Colony. Most of the surviving members of the Confederacy made their way north, eluding or fighting off Spotswood's militia, across western Virginia, across western Pennsylvania, into upper New York, where they were succored by their kin of the same Iroquoian language, and admitted as a Nation into the Confederacy of the Iroquois. Guerrilla bands still identified as



Tuscaroras rather than maroons continued to operate from swamps to the north and east of the Tuscarora heartland until 1718. As late as 1731 Tuscaroras from the far north returned to North Carolina, accompanied by other Iroquois, more to persuade the remnants to join them than to fight.<sup>52</sup>

Historians have confirmed the folk judgment that 1714 marked the end of an era for the English-speaking world: "Queen Anne is dead." It was the beginning of the Whig Ascendancy in Parliament, but specialists in English history have also selected the year as generally pivotal in many basic aspects of society. One list of the changes that distinguish 1714 from 1569 includes the establishment of the limited monarchy, England's entry into continental European politics, the development of a bureaucracy, the rise of executive government, the emergence of high finance and public credit, the birth of tariff protection, the union with Scotland, the end of religious struggles, convulsions in the landowning sector of the economy, and rapid acceleration in the advance of the business and professional interest.

For America, the standard summary study of the middle colonial period, *The Colonies in Transition*, selects the same date for the beginning of a new era, by the years of its title, 1660-1713. A standard college text in colonial history calls 1713 "a turning point in early American history," in the inauguration of a systematic colonial structure, an enormous increase of immigration, wars for the control of North America, and abounding prosperity.<sup>53</sup> For the South these must be added: the very great increase of the Atlantic slave trade and the strengthening and expansion of the plantation slavery economy.

Though North Carolina was among the smallest of the English-speaking communities transformed by the ending of an era in 1714, her change, like that of the Bahamas two years later, was one of the most intense, not only in its suddenness, but in its degree. For here a social order radically different from others, in some respects not even European, was replaced by a society and government normal for the eighteenth century English-speaking world.

As harbinger, twice as many ships were seen arriving in North Carolina in 1714 than ever before. Historians have noted the change without benefit of the social history which explains it. Charles Andrews said, "With the return of peace after the Tuscarora War North Carolina entered upon her career as a normal colony," freed from the tumult of faction. Hugh Lefler, today's specialist in North Carolina history observes:

The removal of the Indian menace and the consequent opening up of vast tracts of land that would soon be

occupied by white settlers . . . and the virtual elimination of personal factions made . . . leadership effective. And with the strengthening of governmental authority, the way was prepared for an era of growth and progress. By . . . 1714, the colony was about to enter a period of "peace and quietness."

And a historian of the colonial constitution exclaimed: "When the student of the Constitutional History of North Carolina comes to this point [the overthrow of the Cary party] he feels like expressing his relief in a long-drawn breath. He is on solid ground at last. The confusion which a dubious system and meager records have hitherto brought to him now gives place to certainty."<sup>54</sup>

In 1715 the Roanoke community was crushed, the Tuscarora Confederacy was overwhelmed, the Tory Party was fallen, and the new regime in North Carolina celebrated with the enactment of a law code. These laws are remarkable both in their scope and the clarity with which they reveal the now resolved conflict between the old settler social order and the normal order of Southern plantation colonies. Some are the first known laws on their subject for the Colony, and have been taken by historians as the first enacted in North Carolina. The components of this law code were:

— An act for the construction of mills, which North Carolina had notoriously lacked.

Enactments for the construction of roads, bridges and ferries, to further commerce (that is, the export of cash crops) and to overcome internal isolation.

An act for the systematic search for better channels between Albemarle Sound and the Atlantic, to overcome external isolation.

An act with teeth to establish the Church of England. It included long lists of parishes and vestrymen appointed and named in the bill, with the detailing of their legal responsibilities.

A provision for marriages by the clergy as elsewhere in the Christian world to replace the secular marriage law and custom which had prevailed up to the Quaker Uprising.

The first militia act for the Colony, establishing an organized force subordinated to officers with authority, in place of the former population in arms.

The first law prohibiting marriage between the races.

A law against harboring escaped slaves, and providing heavy fines.

A law establishing the first legal sanction for slavery in North Carolina.<sup>55</sup>



This law code, preceding the era of growth which now came to the Colony, is positive proof that the new regime and the revolution which had brought it to power were progressive, in the economic sense: promoting internal improvements, sanctioning and protecting slavery, opposing deviant customs deemed subversive of good order, and establishing churches and an armed force, both considered necessary for a stable society. After the triumph of the oath requirement and the defeat of the Quaker Uprising the Old Settler Party never retained power, and ceased to exist. A new party system arose, the Popular Party and the Prerogative Party, but like the politics of many eighteenth century colonies, this was a conflict between the powers of the Assembly and the royal governors, not between fundamentally opposed social orders.<sup>56</sup>

It is no wonder that North Carolina, for the purposes of State pride, the education of youth, and tourism, has not focused on the earliest known permanent settlement, those first counties of Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans and Chowan. "The State is a growth, not a creation; she has no Jamestown and no Plymouth Rock."<sup>57</sup> For Massachusetts folk, Plymouth Village has been holy ground. Virginians have tread with reverence the red clay bank that is the site of Jamestown. But North Carolina youth were taught to sing, "Way down yonder on the Pasquotank, Bullfrogs jump from bank to bank." For their history, North Carolinians have looked to mid-eighteenth century Pamlico or the Piedmont, late in that century. In antiquity this heritage cannot compete with these of Virginia and South Carolina, or most of the other colonies, and so the popular history of North Carolina leaps back to Sir Walter Raleigh's abortive colony of the 1580s. Though significant in the history of exploration and plans for empire, the Roanoke Island Colony had little ascertainable effect on the founding or settlement of either Virginia or North Carolina. Yet for decades proud Tarheels, their children, and vacationers from afar have flocked to the first of the summer festival pageants, "The Lost Colony," staged on Roanoke Island. It is North Carolina's artificial Mecca.

The old original counties are still there between Albemarle Sound and the Dismal Swamp, settled before South Carolina and other colonies, and only a little over a generation after Virginia. But despite the ever-hopeful efforts of latter-day residents of Albemarle, this seedland of one of the oldest of the United States has been long fixed in the minds of North Carolinians as an obscure backwater. Who is interested in a heritage of bullfrogs? Or of first settlers whose manners were strange, morals questionable and purposes puzzling, uncongenial to the mainline of Southern and American development?

North Carolina did remain a little different from its sister Southern states, and a part of this difference is the forgotten gift of the Roanoke

community. Not understanding the historical roots, North Carolinians have tried to express their difference in words. Thomas Wolfe, calling North Carolina "Old Catawba," wrote:

Old Catawba is much better than South Carolina . . . You feel lonely in Old Catawba, but it is not the loneliness of South Carolina . . . These people are really lost . . . There is the most wonderful warmth, affection, heartiness in their approach and greeting, but the people are afraid. Their eyes are desperately afraid, filled with a kind of tortured and envenomed terror of the old, stricken, wounded "Southness" of cruelty and lust . . . Old Catawba is much better . . . There is not the look of fear and cruelty . . .

. . . There is no Charleston in Old Catawba, and not so many people pretending to be what they are not. . . . Old Catawba does not have this to contend with. It has no Charleston and does not have to pretend. They are small, plain people.<sup>58</sup>

Remembering the proverb, that North Carolina is a valley of humiliation between two high hills of pride, that taunt of the neighbor states which rebounds upon the taunter, a North Carolinian of the present century sought its origin. He found the phrase, the valley of humility, in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and quoted the passage as applicable to his State. The source is not inappropriate; the seventeenth century nomadic tinker and Baptist visionary was different, but not so very different, from the Quakers and quakers of Roanoke. Could it be that the proverb did not begin with arrogant Virginians or Charlestonians, but among Bible-reading and Bunyan-reading country folk of colonial North Carolina? The passage itself seems particularly appropriate to the Roanoke community:

All states are full of noise and confusion, only the Valley of Humiliation is that empty and solitary place. Here a man shall not be so let and hindered in his contemplation as in other places he is apt to be . . . in former times men have met with angels here, have found pearls here, and have in this place heard the words of life.



Did I say our Lord had here in former days his country-house, and that he loved here to walk? I will add, in this place, and to the people that live and trace these; grounds, he has left a yearly revenue to be faithfully paid them at certain seasons, for their maintenance by the way, and for their further encouragement to go on in their Pilgrimage. Behold how green this Valley is, also how beautiful with lillies. I have also known many laboring men that have got good estates in this Valley of Humiliation . . . <sup>59</sup>

For Tuscaroras, and Black and poor white settlers of Roanoke, who did not escape or die, but lived on under the new government and social order, the lot was slavery, or the poverty and scorn that was heaped by the plantation South upon marginal people, "free" blacks, halfbreeds, poor white trash. It is they and their descendants who are the true heirs of the first English-speaking explorers, settlers and governors of the land.

Most Tuscaroras who escaped took the far northern journey, traveling west, then north, bypassing the more settled parts of Virginia. But others disappeared in their own country, into the swamps. Some went into those south of Albemarle Sound. Others sought refuge in the north of the Colony. By concerted plan, South Carolina forces strove to drive the Tuscaroras towards Virginia, while Spotswood's militia stood by to head them off. The Native Americans made their way by water as well as land; they were well supplied with canoes and skilled in their use, whether across the open sounds or along the waterways of swamps. Numerous fugitives were reported at Roanoke River, then called the Morratuck, which flows into Albemarle Sound near the western edge of the Dismal Swamp. Some steered their craft along the southern shore of the Sound, eastward to Roanoke Island. The only farther lands from there were the Outer Banks and Currituck Neck, both leading toward the Dismal Swamp. Tuscaroras in flight were seen on the northern coast of the Sound, on the Roanoke shore. King Tom Blunt's Upper Tuscaroras, now "friendly Indians," searched or pretended to search the edges of the Great Swamp, while Spotswood's troops patrolled the Virginia side to see that none came through the Swamp.<sup>60</sup> Between the pincers of South Carolina and Virginia it was the interior of the Great Dismal Swamp which stood available as a refuge for Tuscaroras who would not leave their land, or who were cut off from the northwest migration. Said an early historian:

On the approach of these forces, the Indians sought a shelter in the Dismal Swamp, a vast desert [deserted place], one hundred miles in length, and of considerable breadth, full of lakes and quagmires, in which it was impossible for the whites to follow them; they had with them, portable canoes, with which they reached its most distant extremities.<sup>61</sup>

In 1711, two years before the flight of the Tuscaroras, members of the Roanoke community had fled like them, some to other colonies, others into the swamps of their own country. In the terminology of the time, the two types of escape were called flight, and absconding. The operations of the Roanoke army between the fall of the navy and the invasion of the Marines were almost entirely in deep wilderness, wet and dry; before the Roanoke government's removal to Pamlico, "... their chief sought a safe retreat in the swamps of Tar River; where he raised his standard, and endeavored to bring the Tuscarora Indians into an alliance."

After the dispersal of the government and army by the Marines, the Virginia militia served the same purpose as in the Tuscarora War, guarding the Virginia edge of the Dismal Swamp to apprehend Roanoke fugitives who had entered the Swamp from the southern side. There are no reports of capture of fugitives in Virginia, except some of the principal Roanoke leaders, who had English connections, and were doubtlessly trying to make contact with the Proprietors.<sup>62</sup> But there were other fugitives from Roanoke, members of the defeated army, the politically active, and those whose complexion or way of life forbade absorption into the new North Carolina. Even after 1711, flight continued, perhaps in larger numbers, from impressment into the armed forces of the new regime, a device for control as well as warfare. In 1713 the flight of Roanoke settlers overlapped with the Tuscarora flight.

✓ Many who entered the Dismal Swamp from Roanoke did not intend to attempt the deadly crossing to Virginia, but remained within its sanctuary. The movement was not all pell-mell flight, which in the Swamp meant death, but was at times an organized effort. There were meetings for the purpose, and clandestine journeys back to the drier lands of Roanoke to bring others in. Two guides, by name Cocks and Stafford, escorted forty to fifty folk of Roanoke into the Swamp.<sup>63</sup> Here we seem to be encountering the guidance of the many who did not know the Dismal Swamp, by the few who did. Surely the same service was rendered to Tuscarora fugitives as they began to appear on the Swamp's verge, and surely the guides were both Roanoke settlers and



Native Americans, a distinction without much difference in the neighborhood of the Dismal Swamp, where cultures and kinship had been merging for sixty years. At the inevitable cost of many lost and dead in the Great Swamp, knowledge of its ways was spreading among the fugitives, and spurred by the need for security, extending farther into its depths. In the following decade the first reports began of active maroon communities inside the Dismal Swamp, some identified as Indian, some as Black, and some as tawny white.

The history of Roanoke (as of the Bahamas) is closely linked with the history of maroons. As an independent government before 1665 Roanoke was a maroon state, its origin the flight from servitude, a community known to its enemies, but inaccessible. Between 1665 and 1711 or 1714 Roanoke ceased to be a maroon state (again like the Bahamas) by the *tour de force* of a fugitive community's becoming a self-governing colony under the protection of the Proprietors. Then with the defeat and destruction of the Roanoke community and the defeat and expulsion of the Tuscarora Confederacy, fugitives from both fled into the Dismal Swamp. These constituted the nucleus of the maroon settlements of the Great Swamp.

Out of the remnants of two defeated communities emerged a new community that was to endure for over 150 more years, from 1714 to 1868. It would create an even richer and more distinctive culture than that of Roanoke, would play a significant part in the two most important wars of the United States, and would contribute to the political and spiritual life of the upper South even after the voluntary dissolution of the maroon community. Pity may be the feeling that arises when one contemplates grandparents' building their fugitive community, then grandchildren forced to flee again, and build anew. Or one may be overwhelmed with wonder that transcends pity and anger, at this extraordinary demonstration of the potential nobility of the human race, an example that quite contradicts recent theories of human nature and a pervasive mood of the latter twentieth century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A colorful pretender to the governorship in 1690 was a certain John Gibbs, whose challenge to fight the Governor in single combat "as long as my Eyelids shall wagg" has been often quoted. His significance for the social history of Roanoke is as illustration of the impact of physical upon social environment. He and his private army kidnapped magistrates and carried them to his fort in the Dismal Swamp, across the disputed Virginia line where he could not be pursued. Gibb's private domain is reminiscent of Captain Manuell's, discussed in the chapter on the Black people in the Roanoke community. Both enclaves were symptomatic of geographic isolation and permissive government.

In the colonies at the very same time was another sensational figure with the same, or practically the same name, John Gibb or Gib. If any colonists confused the two, whose style, deeds and wilderness residence were also similar, a rich legend was created. The other John Gibb, a sailor, had been the prophet of a Scottish sect, the Sweet Singers of Israel, which explicitly denounced all authority and wandered shelterless in the wilds of Scotland. Even the most radical of Presbyterians, the Covenanters, understandably saw sorcery in the prophecies of Gibb. One of the Sweet Singer chants was, "Your ministers, your ministers, we will curse them to hell we will damn them and you to hell; we will pray you to hell." The sect was broken up by the authorities, its members imprisoned, and John Gibb sentenced to transportation to the plantations as an indentured servant. In America during the 1680s he escaped to the Native Americans, where he was revered as a mighty spiritual leader; he may have considered that he was merely continuing his witness in the wilderness against English authority. To which colony he was sold is not on record, but John Buchan in his historical novel *Salute to Adventurers* places him in Virginia.

The author of the present study confesses that he thought the two men might well be the same, until Ms. Mattie Parker's preview of newly found documents in process of editing for the new series of the *Colonial Records of North Carolina*. There is found the information that the claimant to the governorship of North Carolina was a member of a British noble family.

"Capt Gibb's His Declaracon (1690)"; "Coll: Ludwell's Lre to the Lt Govr abt North Carolina. July 19th 1690"; in William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1886-1890), vol. 1, pp. 363-65 (hereafter cited as *CRNC*); Marshall De Lancey Haywood, "Phillip Ludwell," in Samuel A'Court Ashe, ed., *Biographical History of North Carolina*, 8 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1905), vol. 6, p. 346; Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1838), pp. 15-17; Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 4 vols.



(Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton & Co., 1830), vol. 3, pp. 348–49, 351n, 353n, 354n, 355n.

<sup>2</sup> “Mr. Gordon to the Secretary (1709)”; St. Paul’s Parish, Chowan Precinct, “Vestry Book (March 9, 1704)”; in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 709, 598.

<sup>3</sup> “The Humble Address of the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled (March 13, 1706),” *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 634–40.

<sup>4</sup> The argument that there must have been an establishment issue to rally other Dissenters to the Quakers, assuming that there were such Dissenters in any numbers or organized, was advanced by Stephen E. Weeks in his *The Religious Development in the Province of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, vol. 10, nos. 5–6 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1892), p. 52, and *Southern Quakers and Slavery*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, extra vol. 15 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1896), pp. 160–61. Herbert L. Osgood questioned this, without resolving the problem, in *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (New York: MacMillan Co., 1907) vol. 2, p. 247. For the lack of churches or church adherents except Quakers, see Chapter 3, notes 19–22.

<sup>5</sup> “Mr. Gordon to the Secretary (1709),” *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 709.

<sup>6</sup> “Instructions to John Hearvey (1679),” *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>7</sup> “Mr. Gordon to the Secretary (1709),” *Ibid.*, pp. 709–10; Stephen Beauregard Weeks, “John Archdale,” in Ashe, *Biographical History*, vol. 1, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Assembly meeting (no author; 1708), *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 697–99.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh T. Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1956), vol. 1, p. 67, follows Saunders, *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. xxix, in the judgment that Quakers did fight. Rufus Jones, in *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: MacMillan, 1911), p. 352, is defensive: “The real issue was the principle of religious liberty, but the Quakers were not active in the rebellion, and did not sympathize with the methods adopted by Carey and Porter, however much they were consecrated in spirit to the principle at issue.” For disciplining, see Friends Monthly Meeting, Pasquotank Precinct, “Minutes (September 16, 1711),” *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 813.

<sup>10</sup> In *CRNC*, vol. 1: “Coll: Jennings to the Lords of Trade (1708),” p. 688; “Mr. Gordon to the Secretary (1709),” p. 710; “Mr. Adams to the Secretary (1710),” p. 733; “Mr. Urmston’s Letter (1711),” p. 768; “Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade July 25th 1711,” p. 780.

<sup>11</sup> “Acts Pass’d in North Carolina 1711,” *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 788–90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: "Spotswood to Board of Trade (July 25, 1711)," pp. 779–80; "Gov. Spotswood to Earl of Rochester (July 30, 1711)," pp. 779; Letter by Council of North Carolina (1711), pp. 806–7; "De Graffenried's Manuscript," p. 912, J.A. Doyle, *English Colonies in America*, vol. 1: *Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas* (New York: Henry Holt, 1889), p. 344.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Story, *A Journal of the Life* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: n.p., 1747), p. 377.

<sup>14</sup> "De Graffenried's Manuscript," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 917; Ashe, "John Porter," *Biographical History*, vol. 2, pp. 368, 372; Jones, *Quakers in the Colonies*, pp. 352, 352n; Stephen B. Weeks, "John Archdale, and Some of His Descendants," *Magazine of American History* 29 (February 1893): 161.

<sup>15</sup> "Spotswood to Board of Trade (July 25, 1711)"; "Spotswood to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina (July 28, 1711)"; in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 780–95.

<sup>16</sup> Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of North Carolina from the Earliest Period*, 2 vols. (New Orleans: n.p., 1829), vol. 1, p. 240.

<sup>17</sup> Council of Virginia, "Journal (June 13, 1711)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 757.

<sup>18</sup> "De Graffenried's Manuscript," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 917–19.

<sup>19</sup> "Spotswood to Board of Trade," p. 782; "Spotswood to the Lords Proprietors," p. 795; "Mr. Dennis to the Secretary (September 3, 1711)," pp. 803–4.

<sup>20</sup> "Copy Letter to Collo Cary and Mr. Hyde (June 20, 1711)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 758.

<sup>21</sup> "The Following Letter Was Not to be Delivered to Mr Cary Unless He Rejected the Mediation Offered in the Preceding Letter (June 21, 1711)," *Ibid.* p. 759.

<sup>22</sup> "Letter from the President and Council of North Carolina to Colonel Spotswood (June 29, 1711)," *Ibid.*, p. 761; Council of Virginia, "Journal (July 5, 1711)," *Ibid.*, p. 763; Council of Virginia, "Journal (July 24, 1711)," *Ibid.* 778; "Spotswood to the Lords Proprietors," p. 800; "De Graffenried's Manuscript," pp. 919–20. Graffenried says Cary's trial was indefinitely delayed.

<sup>23</sup> "Instructions to Governor Hyde by the Lords Proprietors (January 29, 1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 832.

<sup>24</sup> "Gov. Spotswood to Earl of Rochester (July 30, 1711)," *Ibid.* p. 798.

<sup>25</sup> I. K. Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration, 1696–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 142–43; Osgood, *American Colonies*, vol. 2: p. 216.



<sup>26</sup> "Acts Passed in North Carolina 1711"; "General Assembly of North Carolina to the Lords Proprietors (1711)"; in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 791-93; 786.

<sup>27</sup> R. D. W. Connor, *North Carolina: Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth 1584-1925*, 4 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1929), vol. 1, pp. 84, 90-93; Charles Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934-1938), vol. 3, p. 261.

<sup>28</sup> William H. Seiler, "The Anglican Parish in Virginia," and Philip S. Haffenden, "The Anglican Church in Restoration Colonial Policy," both in James Morton Smith, ed., *Seventeenth Century America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 122, 141-42, 166, 168, 191.

<sup>29</sup> Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 179; Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, rev. ed., 1963), p. 153.

<sup>30</sup> Hugh T. Lefler and William S. Powell, *Colonial North Carolina* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 56; Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, new series; Sub-Series: *North Carolina Higher Court Records*; 3 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1968-1974), vol. 3 (sub-series vol. 2), p. xiv; "Mr. Blair's Mission (1704)"; "Petition from North Carolina to the Right Honble the Lords Spiritual & Temporal in Parliament Assembled. The Humble Petition of the Queen's Maties Most Distressed Subjects Inhabiting near Pamlico River in the County of Bath (1704)"; both in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 603, 604. To appeal from proprietary to English government indicates an imperial party, and to appeal to Parliament rather than to Crown is pure Whiggery. The political sophistication of the petition raises an explanation alternate to that given in the text of the present study. Perhaps rather than an expression of the local grievance that came to be used by the Opposition, the petition was "gotten up" by the Opposition to defame the Old Settler Party.

<sup>31</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 4, p. 381.

<sup>32</sup> "Mr. Urmston to the Secretary (July 17, 1711)"; Council of Virginia, "Journal (October 8, 1711)"; both in *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 774, 808.

<sup>33</sup> "Virginia Proclamation (July 24, 1711)," *Ibid.*, p. 776.

<sup>34</sup> "Spotswood to the Board of Trade," pp. 782-83.

<sup>35</sup> "Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade," pp. 811-12.

<sup>36</sup> "Letter from Gov. Hyde (August 22, 1711)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 802.

<sup>37</sup> John Barnwell, "Journal," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 5 (April 1898): 398.

<sup>38</sup> Leonidas Dodson, *Alexander Spotswood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1932), p. 23; Doyle, *English Colonies*, vol. 1, p. 345.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Moore, *History of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Alfred Williams and Co., 1880), pp. 35–36; Osgood, *American Colonies*, vol. 2, p. 43; Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 100; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 264; Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. xxxix; Samuel A'Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1908. Rev. ed., Raleigh, N.C.: n.p., 1925), vol. 1, pp. 181–82; Weeks, *Religious Development*, pp. 63–64.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen B. Weeks, "John Hill Wheeler," in Ashe, *Biographical History*, vol. 7, pp. 474–75; Collier Cobb, "William Laurence Saunders," *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 385–87.

<sup>42</sup> "Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade," p. 862; "Letter to the Lords Proprietors (Governor Thomas Pollock (?), September 20, 1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 862, 873; Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> "Coll: Spotswood to the Lords of Trade (May 8, 1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 839; "Letter to the Lords Proprietors," p. 874; "A letter to My Lord Carteret (September 20, 1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 877; "Gov. Spotswood to the Lord Proprietors (February 11, 1713)," *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 15; "Mr. Rainsford to the Secretary (February 17, 1713)," *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> "Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade (February 8, 1712)," *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 834; "Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade (July 26, 1712)," *Ibid.*, p. 861; "Letter to Lord Carteret (September 20, 1712)," pp. 876–77; Edward Hyde, "Foster's Instructions (1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 899.

<sup>45</sup> Elias Johnson (a native Tuscarora Chief), *Legends, Traditions and Laws, of the Iroquois, or Six Nations, and History of the Tuscarora Indians* (Lockport, N.Y.: Union Printing and Publishing, 1881), pp. 61–65.

<sup>46</sup> Vincent H. Todd, ed., *Christoph von Graffenried's Account of the Founding of New Bern*, North Carolina Historical Commission Publications, vol. 8 (Raleigh, N.C.: n.p., 1920), p. 81; "De Graffenried's Manuscript," *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. 920–22.

<sup>47</sup> E. Lawrence Lee, *Indian Wars in North Carolina, 1663–1763* (Raleigh, N.C.: Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, 1963), pp. 23, 25, 34, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Council of Virginia, "Journal (October 8, 1711)," p. 809; "Colonel Spotswood to the Board of Trade (November 7, 1711)," pp. 809, 816.

<sup>49</sup> Hyde, "Foster's Instructions," p. 900; "De Graffenried's Manuscript," p. 939; Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 72–77.



<sup>50</sup> Barnwell, "Journal," pp. 44-45, 47, 52, 53.

<sup>51</sup> "De Graffenried's Manuscript," pp. 956-57; Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, pp. 77-79.

<sup>52</sup> Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, N.C.: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914), pp. 78, 149; Lee, *Indian Wars*, pp. 47-48; F. Roy Johnson, *The Tuscaroras* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 147-48, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Geoffrey Holmes, *Religion and Party in Late Stuart England* (London: The Historical Association, 1975), pp. 3-4; Wesley Frank Craven, *The Colonies in Transition, 1660-1713* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); David Hawke, *The Colonial Experience* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), p. 361.

<sup>54</sup> "Mr. Urmstone to the Secretary (June 12, 1914)," *CRNC*, vol. 2, p. 132; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, vol. 3, p. 266; Lefler and Powell, *Colonial North Carolina*, p. 80; John Spencer Bassett, *The Constitutional Beginnings of North Carolina*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 12th series, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1894), p. 60. Saunders concurs in his *CRNC*, vol. 2, p. xvi.

Meager records and a confused history before 1714 are linked in the last quotation in the text. The former however could be the result of the revolutionary change which occurred around that year. The judgment is made that officials and citizens in North Carolina have neglected to preserve records, but that the State's reputation in this regard has been exaggerated, in H. G. Jones, *For History's Sake: The Preservation and Publication of North Carolina History 1663-1903* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. xiii, xv-xvi. The charge however has been directed especially to the early colonial period. J. A. Doyle, in his *English Colonies*, vol. 1, p. 328n, describes the total loss of seventeenth century legislative proceedings as "remarkable." William Saunders, in his *CRNC*, vol. 1, pp. iii-iv, finds "scarcely credible" the lack of Assembly proceedings before 1754, of Council proceedings before 1712, and of virtually any records during the first fifty years of the Colony. To account for "the utter absence" of public documents, he suggests the lack of towns and suitable buildings for depositories, for want of any explanation of deliberate destruction.

A possible inducement to destroy the archives did however exist: the social and political revolution, and the new regime's loathing for the social order revealed in the records, as well as the regime's uneasiness at its illegitimate seizure of power. The watershed between extraordinary lack of records and their normal preservation is the time of the Quaker Uprising and the Tuscarora War. But it is unlikely that the archives were destroyed as a result of the fighting. The Cary forces, expecting to return to power at Roanoke, would hardly have carried trunk loads of ancient records in their forced marches through the wilderness. And the Tuscaroras did not attack

Roanoke, where the records had been gathered. The more reasonable hypothesis is that the archives were destroyed by the victors, out of some combination of rage, contempt, uneasiness at legal status, and determination to erase forever a record they considered as obscene as it was dangerous. This would be a close parallel to the destruction of Southern state archives after the overthrow of Radical Reconstruction in the middle 1870s. W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Atheneum 1973), p. 721.

<sup>55</sup> Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, p. 117; Lefler, *History of North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 132; E. Milton Wheeler, "Development and organization of the North Carolina Militia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 41 (July 1964): 309, Rosser Howard Taylor, *Slaveholding in North Carolina: An Economic View*, James Sprunt Historical Publications, vol. 18, nos. 1–2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), p. 9n; *CRNC*, vol. 2, pp. 206–16.

<sup>56</sup> Governor Pollock to the Lords Proprietors (October 20, 1714), *CRNC*, vol. 2, p. 145. Edward Moseley, the gentleman and Anglican among the leaders of the Old Settler Party, went on to become the leader of a new anti-prerogative party, as in other colonies defending the powers of the Assembly against those of the royal governors, and with a whole new range of issues, administrative rather than social. As a transition from the old to the new party system, Moseley in 1715 or 1716 allegedly inserted a secret resolution in the Assembly record, authorizing a delegation to the Lords Proprietors to protest impressment into the militia, bad treatment of remaining Native Americans, and improper methods of collecting the quitrents. The colonial government severely punished him. Council of North Carolina, "Journal" (August 4, 1716; December 31, 1718); General Court of North Carolina (July 28, July 31, October 30, October 31, November 2, 1719); in *CRNC*, vol. 2, pp. 243–44, 321–22, 359–60, 362, 365–66, 367, 368–69. D. H. Hill, "Edward Moseley: Character Sketch," *North Carolina Booklet* 5 (January 1906): 203–205. Connor, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, pp. 94, 112–13.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen B. Weeks, "William Drummond," *The National Magazine* 15 (1891–1892): 617.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Wolfe, *The Web and the Rock* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), pp. 13–15.

<sup>59</sup> Manley Wade Wellman, "The Valley of Humility," *North Carolina Historical Review* 33 (April 1956): 183, 188.

<sup>60</sup> Governor Pollock to Governor Spotswood (1712), *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 884; Letter to Governor Pollock (1713), *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 32; Letter from Pollock (1713), *Ibid.*, p. 39; Letter from Pollock (1713), *Ibid.*, p. 45; "Mr. Rainsford to Mr. Chamberlayne (1713)," *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 265.



<sup>62</sup> "Mr. Urmston to the Secretary (1711)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 773; Martin, *North Carolina*, vol. 1, p. 240 (quotation); Hugh Williamson, *The History of North Carolina*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1812), vol. 1, p. 208.

<sup>63</sup> "President Pollock to the Governor of Virginia (October 5, 1712)," *CRNC*, vol. 1, p. 881.

## Book Two

### The Maroons of The Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina



## Part I

### Continuity And Community

The Dismal Swamp Maroons, 1714–1868

## Chapter 8

### Rustlers and Loyalists: The Rise of the Dismal Swamp Maroons and the British Alliance, 1714–1792

Inside the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia and North Carolina there were settlements of escaped slaves, not merely guerrilla bands but true communities in that they were permanent, and included women and children. Over a span of more than two generations before the Civil War this was alleged by many American and foreign visitors to the region around the Swamp and by other authors. Characteristically these statements were to the effect that some two thousand escaped slaves and their children had long lived within the Dismal Swamp. Further details were rarely given. The twentieth century specialist in the history of slave guerrilla warfare within the United States, who has seen the guerrillas as temporary bands, allows that the Dismal Swamp may have been an exception, in containing a true maroon community.<sup>1</sup>

The following chapters, besides offering a narrative political and a social history of the Dismal Swamp maroons, also demonstrate the continuity of this community. New fugitives entered the Swamp, and many died prematurely, from the dangers of the Swamp or their human enemies. But so swiftly do the events of the narrative history follow one another that it is more reasonable to see a permanent community than unrelated bands forming, unforming and reforming. There was always an ongoing core of persons, and a framework of social institutions that changed in membership, as in any community. There were always guides for the newcomers, not only through the Swamp, but also into the ways of swamp life.

The Great Dismal Swamp extends north and south a few miles inland from the Atlantic on both sides of the Virginia-North Carolina



border. Its area is about one thousand square miles, the size of Rhode Island. Before drainage the area was twice that, about the size of Delaware. The Great Swamp is located in the Virginia counties of Princess Anne, Norfolk, Nansemond and to a limited extent Isle of Wight, and the North Carolina counties of Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan and to a lesser extent Gates.<sup>2</sup> The Dismal Swamp then is a central geographical feature of the southern Tidewater region of Virginia and the northern Tidewater of North Carolina. Cities of the Dismal Swamp region today are Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach in Virginia and Elizabeth City and Edenton in North Carolina. These were villages or hamlets before the Civil War. The only city in the region in the early nineteenth century was Norfolk, Virginia.

Before the Civil War much of the adjoining Atlantic shore was nearly as desolate as the Swamp, but inland to the west of the Swamp, north along the great inlet of the Chesapeake Bay and mouth of the James River in Virginia, and south along another great bay, the Albemarle Sound of North Carolina, lay rich and fertile plantation lands of the Southern Tidewater.

Reasons were few and marginal for whites of the plantation country to approach the Dismal Swamp. But the Swamp was close to those who slaved on the plantations and sought to escape. And for maroon war bands based in the Swamp the nearby plantation country was a convenient object for revenge, plunder, challenge to the system of slavery, and liberation of brothers and sisters still in bondage.

It was possible to live in the Dismal Swamp. It is a freshwater swamp, though so near the ocean, there are islands on the Swamp where settlements could be built and crops grown, and the place teemed with game for hunting. It was not dismal, save in the eye of the beholder, many finding it a place of wild beauty. "Dismal" is not a characterization of this swamp as woe-be-gone, but an obsolete word of French origin which merely means a swamp.<sup>3</sup> But the inner Swamp was unapproachable to outsiders, due to the mud, the pools, the vegetation run wild; only those who knew the routes or were guided could enter and live. It was a jungle. Even today there are sections of the interior never explored on the ground by outsiders. Adding to the security of fugitives was the political limbo in which the Great Swamp lay. The Virginia-North Carolina border, running through the middle of the Swamp, with legal jurisdictions only a step apart, provided scope for avoiding governmental authority. Moreover the line between the two Colonies was not drawn until a century after the founding of Virginia, and some county lines were not completed until the twentieth century. Surveyors could not get in.<sup>4</sup>

There is no evidence that any people ever lived in the Great Dismal Swamp except persons who sought a refuge. It is true that game is plentiful and life otherwise livable in the Swamp, but the difficulties and dangers of travel through the vast quagmires are such that persons would choose to live in drier country and hunt in less difficult wild life habitats unless they were fugitives.

There were inhabitants of the Dismal Swamp before the coming of Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers around 1714. But they were few and little organized, hardly a full or permanent community. The seventeenth century must have been the time for those few painfully to learn safe ways of passage into the Swamp in constant danger and with frequent deaths, adding knowledge and passing it on.

The first inhabitants of the Dismal Swamp were Native Americans, survivors of the small nations of the east coast which had been destroyed by the English colonists, or fugitives from slavery. The Native American nations north of the Tuscaroras and east of the mountains were so small, and destroyed so early, that little is known of their history except that they once existed. When the men were exterminated the women and children were enslaved; Indian slavery together with indentured servitude was the source of labor in the English Colonies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries before the rise of the Atlantic slave trade and Black chattel slavery, and a motive for Indian wars besides the seizure of land.<sup>5</sup>

Those who escaped the destruction of their nations, or later escaped from slavery, fled for refuge into swamps and other wild or isolated country. But north of the Dismal Swamp such places of refuge were not as large or secure in their impenetrability. And so before the Tuscaroras, members of the Susquehanna and other Nations fled into the Dismal Swamp from as far north as Maryland and Pennsylvania. Larger numbers came from closer by, from the burned out towns of the Powhatan Confederacy and from other small forgotten nations snuffed out in Virginia. By 1700 the Chowan Nation, who had lived on the edge of the Dismal Swamp, were either plantation slaves or maroons inside the Swamp. Like the others this was a small nation unable to withstand the white pressure as long as the populous Tuscaroras.<sup>6</sup>

Also before the coming of the Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers, escaped indentured servants had entered the Dismal Swamp during the seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup> Why did they not instead like many others go to the more comfortable land south of the Swamp and join the Roanoke society? Perhaps these whose destination was the Dismal Swamp were the more desperate, more hotly pursued by their masters or threatened by the heaviest penalty. Or perhaps there was a generation difference: by the latter seventeenth century fuller development of colonial



government may have made the relatively open Roanoke country too dangerous for fugitives, though still secure for the children of fugitives. In their laws welcoming fugitives, the Roanoke settlers may have been saying: Stay with us when you can; go to the Swamp when you must. Certainly only the most desperate would brave the still little understood routes from tussock to tussock.

Some of the early white fugitives of the Dismal Swamp were Irish. From serfdom to the English in their homeland they had been transported to the plantations, churchless and priestless, their faith by most Colonies outlawed. Their ancient presence in the Great Dismal Swamp is witnessed by the Celtic names on trails which still survive on the Swamp's edge, Shallalah Road and Ballaback Road, and the continued use by 'colored' people of the Dismal Swamp into the early nineteenth century of such a word as shanty (Irish *shan tigh*, old house).<sup>8</sup>

Judging from the presence of Africans in Virginia from 1619 on, there were probably Black fugitives in the Swamp with Native American and white from the beginning, but not many. The Black population of the plantations was still small.

In this period of the earliest maroon occupation, though numbers were few and organization limited, there was the beginning of guerrilla warfare against the society that had enslaved the fugitives. The attacks were against Virginia, not North Carolina. At the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century while Roanoke settlers and Tuscaroras were holding their ground and preparing for their final struggle in the south, impoverished "lawless Englishmen" and "renegade Indians" engaged in repeated raids against the Virginia cattle industry. Each year Virginia planters who maintained herds of cattle sent them south from Chesapeake Bay and the James River to the fresh grasslands west of the Swamp, herded by overseers and servants. Before their seasonal return to the north, bands from the Swamp descended on them, cut steers out, and made off with them back to their retreat.<sup>9</sup> Here were rustlers two centuries before their heyday of the 1880s in the Far West.

In 1699 the Government of Virginia protested to the Government of North Carolina that these maroon guerrillas when pursued by posses of the cattlemen were wont to escape by crossing the North Carolina border. North Carolina rejected the protest.<sup>10</sup> The Members of the Assembly of that Colony were more likely to harbor than hinder this kindred folk.

That there was a Black presence in this period before the Tuscarora War is shown in a slave insurrection planned jointly by Native Americans and African Americans of the plantations in Isle of Wight

County in Virginia on the edge of the Dismal Swamp in 1709. Those who slaved together could plan together. The Governor and Royal Council of Virginia declared the situation to be dangerous, and appointed a special court of investigation. Numbers of insurrectionists were captured and punished. Their organizer, an African American Captain Peter, escaped, eluded capture for a year, and was next heard of organizing another insurrection in the same region.<sup>11</sup> He is the first of the maroon Captains of the Dismal Swamp whose name has come down to us.

That there were maroons and guerrilla attacks at the Dismal Swamp in the seventeenth century should not obscure the fact that it was not until after 1714 that the population of the Swamp grew sharply, true community became possible, and raids upon the plantations became frequent.

Tuscaroras' and Roanoke Settlers' entering the Swamp after their defeats was responsible for the sudden increase of maroon population.<sup>12</sup> They were undoubtedly the largest number of persons ever to enter the Swamp at one time, migrations rather than individual escapes. Moreover the word must have gone forth in the secret world of the servants quarters of the Colonies, for from this date the number of individual escapes into the Dismal Swamp noticeably increased. That astute imperialist Governor Spotswood of Virginia warned his Council of the danger accumulating in the Dismal Swamp in the year the Tuscarora War ended, 1714: "Loose and disorderly people daily flock" to this "No-Man's-Land."<sup>13</sup> Henceforth fugitives could expect to find in the Swamp guides through the mire, teachers in the ways of survival, and a community to which to attach themselves.

The Roanoke settlers who entered the Swamp were better equipped to survive as maroons than Anglo-Saxons of plantation country would have been, from the hunting component of their previous economy, and their culture, already in part non-European. But they brought no unique contribution for a new maroon community from their world of thought and social experience. Knowledge of the workings of a colonial assembly, skill in party organization and electioneering, a libertarian philosophy opposed to established churches, oaths and licensed marriages were not relevant to the Swamp. Their role now was to swell the Swamp population and merge into a new kind of community.

It was the Tuscaroras who provided something besides numbers for the new maroon community: a politically and socially organized nucleus to which atomized individuals or small ephemeral groups could look for stability within the Swamp. Some of these Tuscaroras had entered the Swamp as no act of desperation but as a clear-cut choice, alternative to the majority of the nation who had migrated far away, and



to King Blunt's people who remained at the mercy of the enemy surrounding them. Theirs was the most militant and intransigent of the alternatives: to remain nearby but hidden, to fight on. With this clear political strategic position, this faction of the Tuscaroras must have possessed a firm understanding among themselves and a decisive leadership, whether one of the kings, a war chief or leaders of a youth movement.

Another asset for the Tuscaroras as a catalyst for community and a help in their own adjustment to the Swamp were previous Dismal Swamp maroons who accompanied them at their entry. These were the Chowans, and probably descendants of other Nations, and possibly maroons of other than Native American descent. During the Tuscarora War maroon war bands had ventured forth from the Swamp and making their way through Roanoke had joined the Tuscaroras in their struggle. There is irony that some were probably members of nations formerly their enemy, put upon by this larger Empire before the coming of the white man. But now Pan-Native-Americanism was in the air, as was to be shown in 1715 South Carolina with the Yamasee War, the putting aside of 'tribalism' in the face of a powerful enemy. It may have been these maroons, the Chowans and any others participating, who suggested the Dismal Swamp to the Tuscaroras. Certainly they must have been helpful to the Tuscaroras in introducing them to the Swamp and to the peoples of the Swamp.

✓ [ To say that the Tuscaroras provided a nucleus for the growth of fuller community within the Swamp is not to suggest that the other maroons generally became Tuscaroras or subjected themselves to their power. Individuals and lone families may have, and gratefully. But the later social development of the maroons shows that bands with a partially developed sense of identity built upon that social basis, became full communities, merged with others, and when merger had gone as far as it could, allied or federated themselves with the other Swamp communities of differing heritage. The natural environment of the Swamp and the social environment of America were not such as would be conducive to tyranny or internecine struggles for power. The role of the Tuscaroras was as a rallying and informal organizing force. Besides their assets of social cohesiveness and group political purpose they also possessed prestige among all the enemies of the Anglo-Saxon establishment. They were a segment of a mighty nation; their traditional homeland adjoined the Swamp; they had just fought a major war against the enemy in open country; their major segment in the north were still sovereign in an extensive territory; and the Dismal Swamp Tuscaroras may have played a part in the forays from the north which continued until the 1730s. This was a people to whom lesser

allies could look with reassuring admiration until a sense of identity and confidence developed further among all components of the Swamp population.

The increase of maroon population after the entry of the Tuscaroras was accompanied by an increase of guerrilla activity. Perhaps the raids into plantation North Carolina between 1714 and 1718 assigned to Tuscaroras based in swamps should be viewed as the beginning of the heightened maroon activity rather than as an aftermath of the Tuscarora War: they were both, depending on whether the viewpoint was that of contemporary Tuscaroras or maroons a few years later.<sup>14</sup> These raids which North Carolina planters identified as Tuscarora were followed with hardly a break by guerrilla operations from the Swamp which the governments of Virginia and North Carolina did not identify as Indian. Now reversing the strategy of escape which was noted twenty years before, the war bands after cattle and plantation raids in North Carolina eluded capture by flight across the Virginia border. When, during one campaign, the North Carolina militia followed the maroon bands into Virginia, that government protested the violation of its territory.<sup>15</sup> Virginia's pique may contradict her former chiding of North Carolina for not helping with maroons who raided Virginia and took refuge in North Carolina, but a Governor's concern for security and inter-Colony cooperation may be quite different from an Assembly's readiness to criticize a competing neighbor Colony. The episode shows that rivalries between Colonies and lack of cooperation were helpful to the maroons, along with their convenient location at a border between jurisdictions. ✓

Shortly after, in 1728, the first outsider made an official visit to the Dismal Swamp. It was the distinguished Virginia planter William Byrd II, his mission the first survey of the Virginia-North Carolina boundary line. Though it is not stated in his report, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the use of the border by maroons as a device for escape was a factor in the decision to make the survey. Though maroons could still move back and forth across the line to escape capture by militia, at least now the two Colonies would know which sections were within the jurisdiction of each.

During the survey party's snail-like progress through the extremely difficult terrain Byrd encountered persons he took to be maroons. (He miswrote the word "marooner"). In his report he re-emphasized the warning that Spotswood had made fourteen years before. Byrd compared the Dismal Swamp maroons to Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome, who had issued a call to the escaped slaves of Italy to join them in the building of a city of refuge in the wilderness. From such a beginning had grown the power of Rome, which was to conquer the other kingdoms of Italy preparatory to the conquest of its empire. ✓



Byrd warned that such a destiny of power might be that of the growing maroon population of the Dismal Swamp if it were not checked in its early stages.<sup>16</sup>

The role of the Tuscarora community in the Swamp as the rallying center for increased population and the organization and cooperation of communities could only be fulfilled by the eventual dissolution of the distinct Tuscarora society and culture. Then in place of the Tuscarora hegemony there could grow a swamp-wide network of equal and cooperating settlements and a new culture incorporating African and European as well as Native American elements. If Tuscarora leadership had continued beyond a certain point the deeper sort of unity and community, that of equals, would have been hindered.

After a generation in the Swamp the Tuscaroras were blending culturally and in family relationships with the African and European components of the population, which were by now at least as large as the Native American. Settlements remained thereafter which emphasized their Native American heritage, but they were merely one type of settlement among several in the general maroon community, and their culture and ancestry, like the others, were mixed. The 1730s, when the Tuscaroras of the north abandoned their interest in North Carolina can be taken as a date for the passing of the Tuscarora hegemony in the Dismal Swamp, or the 1740s when there is record of a new people who for a time became the most active of maroons.

The next social group of the Swamp predominant in activity (again, not in rule over others) was the Scratch Hall folk. These were a tawny or tan skinned people who lived along the southern edge of the Swamp on the North Carolina side of the Border. Scratch Hall was a region of mixed swamp land and pine barrens thick with underbrush, where a stranger was nearly as likely to become lost as in the deeper Swamp. The origin of the name is unknown; there can hardly have ever been a hall in the sense of a rich man's home, since the name was already ancient when it was noted by outsiders around 1728, and a mansion built in the seventeenth century Dismal Swamp is unthinkable.

This tawny, English-speaking people, as isolated from outsiders as any other maroons, were seen as neither white nor black, and can therefore be taken as mainly the amalgamation of the Tuscaroras and the Roanoke settlers, together with other fugitives of indentured servant and Native American descent. Though they seem to have been the closest in descent from the old Roanoke society among the maroon communities, the Scratch Hall people were very different from the seventeenth century settlers of the open country in their community character or style. This

new society, rather than political or 'philosophic', was violent and rough, probably glorying in their roughness as a sign of strength.

The Scratch Hall people were the "wild" cousins of the "domesticated" Poor Whites of the open plantation countryside. A distinguished social historian of the region has seen the origin of Poor Whites in wilderness isolation and those who lived near plantations as the same: the indentured servants of the colonial period. The present-day historian of North Carolina, though seemingly explaining the Poor Whites by genetics ("Their inheritance was poor . . ."), clearly presents them as a subculture. Landless tenants and laborers at the bottom of the social pyramid, they lived in shacks on the outskirts of villages. "Most of the North Carolina whites were poor, but did not belong to the 'poor white' class, which was held in contempt even by many of the slaves. The term 'poor white' connoted more than poverty."<sup>17</sup> The reference to slave contempt for Poor Whites is an old assertion perpetuated by slaveholders and their friends. The degree of its truth, or the exceptions, have not been systematically studied. It does not hold for the interior of the Dismal Swamp.

In the 1730s or 1740s, as the Tuscarora tradition declined in the Swamp, the name of Scratch Hall became known in the plantation lands. Guerrilla attacks that had been called Tuscarora, and then maroon without more specific identification, were now raids from Scratch Hall.

The Scratch Hall community maintained war bands which kept the plantations under frequent harassment, capturing horses, cattle and "committing other enormities." These appear to have begun in the 1730s, and to have reached their full development in the 1740s. Captain Spencer was the name of the most notable of the Scratch Hall military leaders.

This fierce people had bred an equally fierce dog, the Scratch Hall breed, large, rawboned and wolf-like. Whites were not the only society who could make use of ferocious animals to terrorize victims of another race. The Scratch Hall people trained these dogs to exercise the highest skill in the hunting of domestic animals; the function of this breed was a cross between that of the hunting dog and that of the shepherd. Their prey were cattle. Scratch Hall raiders let loose their dogs upon the herds of their enemy, while they themselves remained in hiding. The dogs were trained to cut cattle from the herd, as the herdsman fled from the pack with their remaining herd. Then would the Scratch Hall men emerge from the bushes and complete the round-up.

These attacks were not restricted to the annual cattle drives from Virginia to the grasslands west of the Swamp, but extended to permanent grazing lands which had been developed in North Carolina after the removal of the Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers.<sup>18</sup>



This continuation of the tradition of cattle raids by Dismal Swamp maroons from the 1690s through the 1720s to the 1740s (and 120 years later as an important contribution to the Union cause in the Civil War) results from the location of the cattle country of Virginia and North Carolina, to the immediate west of the Swamp. Moreover cattle (and horses) were portable; tobacco or cotton growing in the ground could not be seized during a guerrilla attack. But it should also be noted that this cattle industry had been pioneered by those "civilized Indians" who had developed herds along the Chowan River before their dispossession. The Dismal Swamp maroons may have justified themselves that in rustling cattle they were taking back what had been taken from them, or from their cousins.

In 1745 the North Carolina legislature enacted a severe law against rustling, and characterized the enemy as persons outside civilized society, with "no settled Habitation, nor visible Methods of Supplying themselves, by Industry or Honest Calling."<sup>19</sup> This is the old definition of vagrant or pauper; the anti-rustling law is a reminder to justices of the peace and militia officers that the social deviant, if not technically a criminal, is yet the kinsman or friend of criminals. It was still a cultural war, as it would be to the end.

There was an African American element among the Scratch Hall folk: Some were "almost as tawny as mulattoes."<sup>20</sup> But the African ancestry was minor, judging from the usual descriptions of the Scratch Hall people as generally mestizo. Yet the social affinities of Scratch Hall were with the Black people not the white, one an ally, the other the enemy. Solidarity stood the test of generations. Over a century after the emergence of Scratch Hall the tawny people of the Swamp were considered 'colored' by the United States Army and more important considered themselves 'colored' along with the Black people in the First and Second North Carolina Colored Volunteer Regiments of the Union Army in the Civil War, tawny companies within the Black regiments.<sup>21</sup>

A third social development within the Dismal Swamp, along with the initial hegemony of the Tuscaroras and the subsequent rise of Scratch Hall, was the increase of Black population until it predominated.

There had probably been some African Americans from the beginning, and there had been a Black military leader, Captain Peter, as early as 1709. But the proportion of Black maroons seems to have remained minor for the first decade or two after the increase of arrival of fugitives following the entry of the Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers. Black maroons may not have predominated until the mid-eighteenth century, though they had become a significant part of the population before then. Their relative fewness at first was not because they were

any less prone to escape but ~~because the Atlantic slave trade and Black chattel slavery did not become the foundations of the English plantation Colonies until the 1720s~~. When bound labor was predominantly white and Native American, maroons were predominantly Native American and white. When slavery became Black, maroons became predominantly Black. Judging from the sources available, the proportion of African American people along the Dismal Swamp maroons kept pace with the proportion in plantation bondage.

In connection with Governor Spotswood's official warning of the menace of Dismal Swamp maroons in 1714 mention was made of escaped Negro slaves.<sup>22</sup>

In 1728 during his visit to the Dismal Swamp William Byrd II encountered three separate dwellers of the Swamp. Two he did not identify as to race; these may have been white or of white and Native American descent. The third was African American, a family who had escaped from slavery:

... we came upon a Family of Mulattoes, that call'd themselves free, tho' by the Shyness of the Master of the House, who took care to keep least in Sight, their Freedom Seem'd a little Doubtful. It is certain many Slaves Shelter themselves in this Obscure Part of the World . . .<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that when Byrd spoke of a new Rome, a maroon-born military power, his thinking out of his experience was of those "many slaves," Black people who had betaken themselves to the Swamp.

By 1733 outsiders thought of the maroons of the Dismal Swamp as Black, rather than Indian or white.<sup>24</sup> And from the latter eighteenth century until Emancipation notices of escaped slaves frequently included the information that the fugitive was believed to be making his way to the Dismal Swamp,<sup>25</sup> while reports of guerrilla attacks and maroon leaders were more often of Black than of tawny maroons.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1730s and 1740s while Scratch Hall led in campaigns against the plantation lands, the ever-increasing African American fugitives were undoubtedly learning and teaching the routes through the Swamp and the ways of survival, building mutual acquaintance and trust, and finding common denominators from their varied African backgrounds and American experiences, in other words, developing a community as Scratch Hall and others of the Swamp had done in their time. With the southern sector of the Swamp already occupied by Scratch Hall the African Americans established their settlements in the middle and northern regions of the Swamp. In 1775, on the eve of the



American Revolution, an English fugitive from the "Liberty Boys" was given sanctuary in the Dismal Swamp by a Black guide, and reported that African Americans had lived in the Swamp safely for over thirty years, erecting habitations, clearing fields, and raising stock. There was room for all.

Very early the Black maroons of the Swamp were characterized as "barbarous," which translated from the xenophobic suggests that they had little trouble in finding common elements from their African heritage with which to build a new culture, Pan-African as well as African American. The early Black maroons were also called "stubborn," and this they were. Nor they did not wait upon completion of community building to launch counter-attacks upon the society which had enslaved them. As early as 1733 guerrilla war bands from the Black maroon settlements were making themselves felt in the plantation lands beyond the Swamp.<sup>27</sup> What with Black guerrilla raids and the escape of larger numbers of African American slaves into the Swamp it is highly probable that the two were related: that in this early period as later the Dismal Swamp maroons were liberating their brethren still held in bondage.

It would appear that from the mid-eighteenth century to the Civil War there was a division of labor among the maroons in their war upon plantation society. The tawny maroons of the south Swamp focused their attacks upon North Carolina; the Black maroons of the north Swamp concentrated their raids upon Virginia. This was the natural result of Scratch Hall's location, which in turn harks back to the independent Roanoke community south of the Swamp in the seventeenth century.

Though there were these two broad divisions within the maroon community, and numerous cultural differences from settlement to settlement, they were all one in their origin as fugitives from the plantation order and continuing enmity towards that system. In the fullest records available for maroon life, those reporting guerrilla attacks, there is no hint during the 150 years of betrayal of one ethnic component of the maroons by another. Persons of one ancestry found spouses of another and bore children of both.<sup>28</sup> Many Native Americans merged into the African American maroon communities as others merged with whites to form Scratch Hall.<sup>29</sup> Some indentured servant ancestry surely existed among Black maroons as some African ancestry among Scratch Hall maroons.<sup>30</sup>

More significant to the history of the maroons was the exchange of cultures, Native American, European and African. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century outsiders reported that a new culture was being created in the Dismal Swamp.<sup>31</sup> The distinctiveness of

the  
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maroon culture, its sharp difference from Anglo-Saxon, was even greater than that of the old Roanoke culture had been, due to the more radically different environment of the Swamp and the greater opportunities for cultural exchange in isolation.

Throughout their history the grand political strategy of the maroons was a search for alliances. From this it appears they were aware of their smallness of numbers, their military weakness, as compared to the enemy. The Roanoke community had been in a sense the social result of political alliance (escaped indentured servant and Native American). The entry of Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers into the Swamp had been the last act of political and military alliance outside the Swamp. The confederating, often merging, of Native American, white and Black forming the Dismal Swamp maroon community was an act of alliance, alliances for escape, survival, security, community, defense and attack. And the two high tides of maroon war upon plantation society were in alliance with outside powers: first with Great Britain, then a century later, with the northern States of the United States.

The Dismal Swamp maroon military alliance with Great Britain began in 1775. By then the maroons were numerous enough, united enough and experienced enough to make effective use of it.

If a lack of reports from the time be taken as an indication, the 1760s were a lull before the storm for maroon guerrilla activities, though raids on plantations did not end with the North Carolina Cattle Law of 1745. The storm was the American Revolution.

When the fighting began, the last Royal Governor of Virginia, John Murray, Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation freeing slaves and indentured servants of rebels who would fight for the King. Many joined him at his headquarters on the edge of the Dismal Swamp and fought well until the withdrawal of British operations from that area soon after. This had been a 'trial balloon', for the British high command adopted this strategy of military emancipation as its policy for North America. Now larger numbers of slaves and indentured servants answered the call by escape from the plantations, while many others were moved by American slaveholders to regions far from the British Army; the economy of the South was seriously disrupted. The freedmen served with the British Army, the largest number in Supportive services, but some as soldiers of the line. Many rendered extraordinary service as guerrillas behind the enemy lines ("foragers"), river and coastal pilots, spies, and guides, especially through the swamplands of the south. With the aid of these Black freedmen (and freed indentured servants) the British Army reconquered the Bahamas, Georgia and South Carolina, re-established colonial governments, and



extended this Southern campaign into North Carolina and Virginia. When the War ended the British refused to return their Black veterans whom the United States demanded as property, and these departed with the British fleet to the Bahamas and West Indies, Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone.<sup>32</sup>

✓ | Lord Dunmore's 'pilot project' of 1775-1776, successful in its demonstration of an outpouring of Black and Poor White support for the ending of plantation servitude, occurred in the Dismal Swamp counties. It is reasonable to see a relationship between this event and the maroon guerrillas of the Swamp, considering that guerrilla warfare on the part of Black and Poor White maroons had preceded and was to follow the American Revolution.

Throughout the South as a whole most of the Black (and Poor White) supporters of British military emancipation were newly escaped from servitude. But was there, in the Dismal Swamp region where the policy was made, significant participation by already established war bands of the maroon community in the Black and Poor White regiments gathered under the aegis of Lord Dunmore?

→ There are indications that the maroon community was the core of this British sponsored people's army. Dunmore had conducted secret negotiations before the fighting began "to collect from among the Indians, negroes (*sic*) and other persons," "on the back Parts of the Province of Virginia,"<sup>33</sup> a force to combat the planter rebels, and it would seem that secret negotiations would have been easier with maroons than slaves, and that the Dismal Swamp qualifies as one of "the back Parts" of Virginia, wilderness uninhabited by Anglo-Saxon settlers. Dunmore established his headquarters at Norfolk, and then with the fleet off Portsmouth, the two principal ports adjoining the Dismal Swamp.<sup>34</sup> The only two pitched battles of the Black and Poor White troops in the Virginia campaign of 1775-1776 were inside or on the very verge of the Swamp.<sup>35</sup> The troops showed exceptional skill in foraging through enemy countryside, piloting through the intricate and little known inlets and streams of the region, searching out enemy material hidden in the Swamp, and controlling the surrounding countryside outside places fortified by the enemy by means of guerrilla warfare.<sup>36</sup> all talents more likely to be possessed by experienced maroons than by newly escaped plantation laborers. And the repeated speedy outpourings of Black and Poor White supporters when the British fleet returned five years later, six years later and thirty-eight years later (during the War of 1812)<sup>37</sup> suggest a degree of organization and freedom for quick conferences and decisions more likely to be available to maroon communities than to the plantation quarters of the enslaved.

Besides these indications there is also one solid proof that the maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp were indeed a part of the Black and Poor White army of the Swamp region during the American Revolution: there are reports that already organized war bands as well as individuals continued to join the Black and Poor White Loyalist regiments during the British presence at the Dismal Swamp.<sup>38</sup>

News of the first battles of the American Revolution reached the South in the Spring of 1775, and the Virginia Governor let it be known that for lack of royal troops in his Colony he might raise a Loyalist force and expected to find "all the Slaves on the side of Government."<sup>39</sup> Immediately Black men presented themselves at the Governor's Palace. Dunmore wrote the British Minister of State for America, who was an Abolitionist, that he had established plans for an alliance with Native Americans and African Americans in the isolated regions of the Colony. In the Summer the Colonial Government moved from hostile Williamsburg to the coast to be near the British Navy; the move also placed the British authorities in the region of the Dismal Swamp. South of the Swamp the Royal Governor of North Carolina Josiah Martin supported Dunmore's strategy of a military emancipation alliance with the Black people, writing "... the Whites are greatly outnumbered by the Negroes ... a circumstance that would facilitate exceedingly the Reduction of these Colonies who are very sensible of their Weakness arising from it."<sup>40</sup> Black volunteers piloted British coastal and river cutters along the shores and inlets, destroying plantations and liberating the enslaved.<sup>41</sup> Hundreds of Black people and poor whites flocked to the beaches by the Dismal Swamp where the British colors waved.<sup>42</sup>

Though Dunmore's Emancipation Proclamation had not yet been officially announced and escaped slaves and indentured servants were not yet legally free and members of the British forces, companies of Black and Poor White guerrillas operated inland in the Autumn, between the Swamp and the coast. They raided three American-held villages and were able to locate and carry away seventy-seven pieces of field artillery which had been hidden in the swamp by the American militia.<sup>43</sup> The guerrillas were better at finding than their enemies at hiding.

At this time a British detachment of seventeen men raided the City of Norfolk. The white population looked on without taking action, ignoring the summons of the American militia drums, while a Black crowd gathered on the street and gave three cheers for Lord Dunmore.<sup>44</sup> A little earlier in the century this only city of the Dismal Swamp region had been noted as a trouble spot. Black people and others of the "unruly" and "uncontrollable" seaport population had held night assemblies and created "disturbances."<sup>45</sup>



In North Carolina the American State Legislature now enacted a law forbidding the manumission of slaves except by permission of a county court. The reasons for the enactment of such legislation at this time are indicated in the title of a strengthening law enacted in 1777 "An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrection" and the Preamble to another enacted in 1778 which declared that "divers evil-minded persons, intending to disturb the public peace, did liberate and set free their slaves."<sup>46</sup> Sixteen slaveholders were noted in the court record of a single county as having committed this crime of freeing their slaves at the time of the British-Black-Poor White military operations around the Dismal Swamp (before 1777).<sup>47</sup> Violations of these laws continued throughout the War, and during the years immediately following. Those who were thus freed ~~remained in or around the Dismal Swamp~~ during the 1775-1776 campaign and later phases of the War in that region, despite the danger of apprehension by the county or State authorities; later some escaped to the North.<sup>48</sup> The county authorities of Perquimans and Pasquotank Counties went beyond the provisions of the earlier legislation in seizing freed persons and selling them to the highest bidder, but these actions were retroactively legitimized by the State Legislature, and after twenty years of litigation the Congress of the United States rejected the petition of the re-enslaved.<sup>49</sup> This is the first existing petition of African Americans to Congress, and was precedent for Congress's permanent policy of refusing consideration to all anti-slavery petitions.<sup>50</sup>

The crime of freeing slaves was attributed by the early legislation to subversive slaveholders who by their action intended to disturb the public peace by encouraging slave insurrection. In the last of the series of laws, enacted in 1788 five years after the end of the War, the Legislature saw the more recent culprits as Quakers, "divers persons from religious motives, in violation of the said law, continue to liberate their slaves, who are now going at large to the terror of the people of this State."<sup>51</sup> Freedmen, evidently, were still fighting for freedom after the departure of their British allies. The change of the description of the malefactors from subversive opponents of the American regime to Quakers was a distinction without much difference. During the American Revolution Quakers who were not neutral were Loyalists. And the "Liberty Boys," the adherents of the American Revolution, generally treated neutrals as Loyalists, thus often making them into true Loyalists.

Here is light upon the problem of Loyalists slaveholders amid the British military emancipation strategy and alliance with the African American people. Under the terms of Dunmore's emancipation proclamation and the same policy later proclaimed by the British high

command, the liberation of slaves and indentured servants who would fight for the Royal cause only applied to the servants of rebels against the Crown. The ownership of slaves by Loyalists was not threatened. Yet with the slaves and indentured servants of nine out of ten plantations escaping or trying to escape to the British lines the position of the Loyalist slaveholder was awkward. An answer to this contradiction is that Loyalist slaveholders placed their patriotism above their purse, or hoped for long-range advantage over immediate comfort, and freed their slaves, to join the struggle against the rebel planters. They lost a slave, but gained a fellow Loyalist.

All of the legal records located concerning the freeing of slaves for subversive reasons are from the Dismal Swamp Counties. Background for this practice and the initiation of legislation to prevent it is provided by the military events in North Carolina in the Fall of 1775, the year in which the first of that series of legislation was enacted. In preparation for an invasion of North Carolina planned by Dunmore, agents of the British-Black-Poor White coalition appeared in the counties south of the Dismal Swamp, to encourage and assist slave insurrections in that region. The ethnicity of these agents is not specified. They were however a band rather than single spies, since the State found it necessary to send in a detachment from General Robert Howe's North Carolina Regiment of the American Army to "disperse" them. Then Howe, with six hundred soldiers, marched around the Dismal Swamp and joining troops of the state of Virginia helped to force British units out of Norfolk, which they had briefly occupied.<sup>52</sup> It was not a time for supporters of the Revolution to take lightly the freeing of slaves by Loyalist masters.

In the meantime the Black and Poor White troops in Virginia had won a notable victory fought in the open field, the Battle of Kemps Landing, an important village of Princess Anne County, located at the very edge of the Swamp. Here the American minutemen of the region had gathered in force to hold the road open for the Virginia State troops assembled at Williamsburg. The Loyalists, numbering six hundred, vowed to close this road to reinforcements as they marched on Kemps Landing, though the enemy awaiting them were two regiments or more of militia, and the Loyalists were unschooled in formal battle, the maroons guerrillas, the rest, until the last few months or less, field hands. The Loyalists, most of them African American, and most of the remainder Poor Whites, bravely charged the Virginia militia. The American regiments fired one volley from their position, then broke and fled. During the pursuit the Loyalists killed a number of their enemy and captured fourteen, including two Colonels of the plantation aristocracy, one taken by Black soldiers, the other by Poor Whites, a



fair division.<sup>53</sup> Now, on November 14, 1775, Governor Dunmore rode into Kemps Landing amid the rejoicing of the people and publicly read his Proclamation, making official what had been unofficial since the early summer:

... I do hereby ... declare all indented servants, Negroes or others (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining His Majesty's Troops, as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing the Colony to a proper sense of their duty, to His Majesty's crown and dignity.<sup>54</sup>

Thereupon the Royal Ethiopian Regiment was officially constituted, its uniform the famous British scarlet, but with a sash across the chest bearing the words "Liberty to Slaves."

The Ethiopian Regiment and the Poor White companies met their great defeat the next month, at the Battle of Great Bridge. This was the bridge, twelve miles south of Norfolk, across a span of the Swamp, from which the two roads around the Dismal Swamp branched, an even more strategic place than Kemps Landing. But the Virginia troops from Williamsburg had at last arrived, and Dunmore underestimated their numbers and zeal as compared to the local American militia. The Ethiopian Regiment and the Poor White companies again bravely charged, but now it was along a narrow bridge, and against fortifications as well as the best troops Virginia had to offer. The Loyalists stood their ground in the narrow space for nearly half an hour of bloody combat, but their casualties were heavy, over sixty, ten per cent of their numbers, during the long retreat from the bridge to the beaches.<sup>55</sup>

During the remaining five months of the campaign American troops held the fortified towns and villages, but Dunmore still maintained a land base on the beach, and Blacks and Poor Whites controlled the countryside, fighting as they knew best, as guerrillas. The majority of the population of the Dismal Swamp counties provided the British Army, regulars and partisans, with provisions raided from the American plantations. Without this help, Dunmore could not have remained a month.<sup>56</sup> And this majority of the region who supported the Loyalist cause are repeatedly reported as having been poor, white or Black. It is at this time that it is also reported that already organized war bands as well as individuals continued to join Dunmore.<sup>57</sup> So overwhelming was the response to Dunmore's Proclamation that the Virginia State Government ordered the deportation to the interior of the State of the entire known and reachable population of Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties, some 5000 souls. This order was about to be

executed with musket and bayonet when Governor Dunmore and the British regulars, including 300 of the Ethiopian Regiment, ravaged by smallpox, evacuated Virginia, sailing to the North with the British Fleet in August, 1776.<sup>58</sup>

If the year of Dunmore's campaign must be considered primarily a part of the War of the American Revolution and secondarily a social war, the following years are the reverse in this region: a continuation of the old maroon struggle against slavery, approved but not commanded or aided by the British. Well-to-do North Carolinians who were Loyalists continued to free their slaves illegally. The Dismal Swamp was still a base and a home unknown and impenetrable to outsiders, for soldiers whom some people called Loyalists but most did not.

Continuously during these years bands of Black guerrillas and white "Ragamuffins" spread terror through Tidewater Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>59</sup> The Captain of the most feared company and commander in chief of all the bands was Josiah Philips. He was born at the Dismal Swamp, in the old swamp-side village of Lynnhaven, the original seat of Princess Anne County. Before his taking to the military life he had been a laborer, a reminder of the social character of the struggle and a suggestion that it was not British officers or Loyalist gentlemen who commanded in this theater of war. In 1778 Captain Philips was captured and hanged by the planter government, but the power delegated to him passed on to other paramount chiefs.

Princess Anne and Norfolk Counties were the most devastated. The maroons maintained a constant pressure of ambushes, seizure of property, killing of planters, burning of plantations, carrying off of provisions and livestock, and freeing of slaves. A large proportion of the population of the region continued to support the armed bands, and though there was no British authority or armed force present, for a part of this period the law of Virginia and the United States did not run to Princess Anne County. Dismal Swamp maroon independence for a time extended beyond the Swamp.<sup>60</sup>

In 1780 a British fleet took Portsmouth and an army disembarked. As in Lord Dunmore's days large numbers of Black people and probably Poor Whites immediately flocked to the British standard until they learned that it was not bent on occupation of the upper South but was marching to join the theater of war in the deep South.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the intelligence that so many warriors were still active in the Dismal Swamp region was taken seriously by the British high command. For at the end of the year another British army was landed at Portsmouth, this time to stay, to devastate the enemy, to conquer Virginia if possible, and to link up with the main British army under General Cornwallis which was moving up from the liberated deep



South with its Black and white Loyalist auxiliaries and partisans. Again at the Dismal Swamp large numbers of Black people appeared to the British (and probably Poor Whites) and new Black Loyalist units were mustered into the British Army. The State Government of Virginia chose to relocate its capital, permanently, from Williamsburg to Richmond, a good safe distance (they thought) from that ever-recurring annoyance, the Dismal Swamp. Now with the augmented maroons and a British army for the first time consolidated, the Virginia plantation society was terrorized throughout the eastern, settled portion of the State.<sup>62</sup> At last the only important American-owned industry of the Dismal Swamp, a lumber operation which had survived thus far with the greatest difficulty, was liquidated, by the combined efforts of its Black "servants" and their armed friends who appeared from nowhere out of the Swamp.<sup>63</sup>

In the Summer of 1781 an Army intended by the United States to stop Cornwallis' approach from the South moved up from North Carolina to end the British control of so much of eastern Virginia. But British regulars and the Loyalist partisans in several battles along the Dismal Swamp hurled the American Army out of Virginia.<sup>64</sup> The high point of the Virginia campaign was the capture of Richmond, the new State capital, far in the west, by the British regulars and the Black and poor white partisans.<sup>65</sup> The State Governor, Thomas Jefferson, fled without defending his city, a flight that was considered ignominious by many, then and now. It appeared that Virginia was to fall to the combined British-Loyalist forces even as the deep South had.

General Cornwallis was approaching from the south with his army, accompanied by hundreds of Black guerrillas. It is reported that by the time they reached the Dismal Swamp region the latter numbered two thousand, "Pillaging and plundering," successfully raiding even the principal fortified village south of the Swamp, Edenton.<sup>66</sup>

In Virginia this army and that which had been harassing Virginia joined forces, but units of the American Army converged on Cornwallis and maneuvered the British forces onto the peninsula of Yorktown. Cornwallis awaited the British fleet as Washington's Continental Army moved south to complete the Siege of Yorktown. The British Fleet did not arrive; a French fleet did, allies of the United States, which ended all hope of escape by sea. As the War ended with the ceremonious surrender of the British regulars, the Loyalist guerrillas somehow escaped from the Yorktown peninsula and made their way through enemy country back to the Dismal Swamp.<sup>67</sup>

For Britain the war was over, but not for the guerrillas. Guerrilla warfare still raged around the Dismal Swamp, for another fourteen months until the formal Peace of Paris, in the name of the British-

Black-Poor White alliance, after 1782 in the name of the maroons alone.<sup>68</sup> Virginia proclaimed as outlaws the guerrilla leaders Captain Levi Sykes who had served under the renowned chief Josiah Philips, and Captain Robert Stewart, who had risen to leadership since Philips' time. But the proclamation meant little in the depths of the Great Swamp. A European traveler in 1784 reported that planters were-afraid to enter the swamp where permanent communities of escaped slaves lived in security and plenty.<sup>69</sup>

Though general studies of the American Revolution might not emphasize this aspect of the war, the elite Daughters of the American Revolution of the Dismal Swamp region well understood a century and a half later that the American Revolution for their ancestors had been a war against escaped slaves and escaped indentured servants.<sup>70</sup> And their ancestors at the time had understood that their war was not a political struggle for independence of the United States against Great Britain, but a social war of the planter interest against the enslaved. They understood this so well that they did not call the war The American Revolution, but Philips' Rebellion, after the paramount chief of the maroons. It is no wonder in the 1860s when Black and tawny guerrillas emerged from the Dismal Swamp to fight slavery in the Civil War, the Confederates of that region called them Tories.<sup>71</sup> They were Tories, the great-grandchildren of Dunmore's army. In some parts, Tory for a century meant, not a sympathizer with George III and the English parliament, but an African American or Poor White who fought for his freedom, and the freedom of his people. ★

For two hundred years John Murray, Lord Dunmore has been reviled as a monster by the elite of Virginia and North Carolina. But his name became a beloved memory in the African American community,<sup>72</sup> symbol of days of glory, days of freedom. He was also remembered a very long time by Poor Whites. There is a tradition in the author's Virginia Poor White family, handed down for six generations, that we are the children of supporters of Lord Dunmore. Early in the twentieth century one of the members of the family attended the inauguration of a Governor of the State of Virginia. Though a laborer, this family member took his seat in the section reserved for dignitaries. As ushers and police removed him he protested, "You can't do that to me. I am one of Lord Dunmore's Boys." He was not a man usually considered peculiar. His eccentricity in this case was not psychological but social. He was the representative of a certain ancient and forgotten interest present at the ceremony, to observe the installation of one of the line of leaders of the opposite, usurper interest. Some Loyalties take a long time dying.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The essay "Slave Guerrilla Warfare" in Herbert Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 11. For the Dismal Swamp and a bibliography of literary references, pp. 11-13, 193n. Equally and independently valuable for escaped slave guerrilla warfare in the United States is Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers 1969; original ed. Columbia University Press, 1943), *passim*. One historian of slavery has positively affirmed the continuity of plantation raids from the Dismal Swamp. R. H. Taylor, "Slave Conspiracies in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 5 (January 1928) 25.

<sup>2</sup> David Hunter Strother, "The Dismal Swamp," *Harper's Monthly* 13 (1856) 448-50; Virginia Department of Conservation and Economic Development, *The Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia* (n.p.: n.p., 1965), p. 5; Hubert J. Davis, *The Great Dismal Swamp* (Richmond, Va.: Cavalier Press, 1962), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 10, notes 11-17.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1959), vol. 1, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 17, 22, 140-42. This is the most valuable local history for Dismal Swamp lore, garnered from oral sources, recorded in earlier writings, or directly. Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 1, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 19, 154; John Hamilton Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines* (New York: Easton and Mains, 1906), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 39n. The Protestant "Bible Belt," much less its swamp lands, was hardly a goal of Irish immigrants of the 1840s.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 13-15, 18-20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 17, 22, 140-42; Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 1, p. 124.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 41, 153.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 7, note 52.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> William Byrd, *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), p. 58. The earliest published version appeared in 1841. The dates of the manuscripts are not known, but presumably soon after the survey, 1728.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 107-9. For other Poor Whites: Arthur Pierce Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Va.: Mariners Museum, 1953), p. 156; Hugh T. Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1954, rev. ed., 1963), p. 397. The author of the present study, of poor white heritage, capitalizes the name as an ethnic (cultural) group.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 116, 120.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49. Besides the quotation concerning appearance, there is a statement as to ancestry.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 11, note 15.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Byrd, *Dividing Line*, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 146, 153-55.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Arnold, *The Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond* (Norfolk, Va.: n.p., 1888), p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 451; Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853-1854*. 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 117-19; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> J. F. D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America*, 2 vols. (London: Robinson, Robson and Sewell, 1784), vol. 2, pp. 101-2, 232-39; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 154.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13. Also see notes 15-17 above.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1961). Chapters 2, 7, 8 and 9 provide a detailed study of the Black-British alliance in both its Lord Dunmore and deep south phases, in respect to freedmen, not maroons.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21n.



<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 27, 30.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 27–29.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29; Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 54–56.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73, 113; Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 84.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 10, notes 49–73.

<sup>40</sup> Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21n.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 29.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26; Legh R. Watts, *An Address Embracing a Historical Sketch of Norfolk County, Virginia*. July 4, 1876 (n.p.: Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, 1964), p. 23; Helen Read, "My Mother," *The Lower Norfolk County, Virginia, Antiquary* (New York: Peter Smith, reprinted 1951), vol. 2, no. 4 (1895), p. 133. The memoir was titled and "written from her lips by William Maxwell," her son. No date is given for the recitation of the memoir, but it was likely to have been early nineteenth century, since Mrs. Read was an adult at the outbreak of the American Revolution.

<sup>44</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: The Citadel Press, 6th paperbound edition, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 39–41.

<sup>48</sup> Perquimans County Court, North Carolina, Manumission Petition, May 5, 1778, Manumission Papers, Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* United States House of Representatives, Manumission Petition, January 23, 1797, in Aptheker, *Documentary History of the Negro People*, vol. 1, pp. 41–43.

<sup>50</sup> Perquimans County Court, Manumission Petition; Aptheker, *Documentary History of the Negro People*, vol. 1, pp. 39–41.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, N.C.: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914), pp. 86, 96, 157.

<sup>54</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 55; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, pp. 23, 27–29.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 34, 56–58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>58</sup> For the class and ethnic composition of the Loyalists see *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 55–57, 65–67; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 29; Read, "My Mother," *Lower Norfolk Antiquary* (1895), vol. 3, no. 1, p. 23; vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 133–35. For the joining of war bands as well as individuals to Lord Dunmore's cause, see *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 133; Watts, *Address*, p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 56–58.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; Elkanah Watson, *Men and Times or the Revolution Memoirs . . . 1777–1842* (New York: Dana and Company, 1857), p. 44; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 154–56.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*; William S. Forrest, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakston, 1853), p. 445; E. E. Ferebee, *Economic and Social Survey of Princess Anne County*, University of Virginia Record Extension Series, vol. 8, no. 9 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1924), p. 10; Watson, *Men and Times*, p. 44; Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, pp. 72, 77; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 71; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 154–56.

<sup>62</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 71–73.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73; Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, p. 108.

<sup>64</sup> Jacob Collee to Dismal Swamp Land Company, July 31, 1781, Dismal Swamp Land Company Papers, Manuscript Collection, Duke University Library; *Ibid.*, December 12, 1782. Collee was agent for the Company. In the second letter the signature appears to be Collene rather than Collee.

<sup>65</sup> Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, pp. 109, 164.

<sup>66</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 73.

<sup>67</sup> Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, pp. 165, 167.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 73.

<sup>69</sup> Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, pp. 110, 169.

<sup>70</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 71, 73; Johann David Schopf, *Travels in the Confederation (1783–1784)*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: William J Campbell, 1911), vol. 1, p. 100.

<sup>71</sup> Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle*, p. 86. This work is an excellent example of how a local historian of Anglo-Saxon or conservative bias if



well-informed and outspoken may reveal bits of the history of the other Americans.

<sup>72</sup> John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 425n.

<sup>73</sup> Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, pp. 31–33.

## Chapter 9

### Political Conjure: The Vision of Peter II and Its Failure, 1792–1862

Five years after the Peace of Paris had ended the war of the American Revolution, North Carolina enacted the third of its series of laws forbidding the manumission of slaves. The Quakers who ten years before had been a part of the Loyalist emancipators continued their illegal practice; the Society of Friends was rapidly approaching its nineteenth principle that no member of a Meeting might own a slave. Many freedmen continued to try to elude the County authorities, and a post-war reign of terror descended on the Black people of the Dismal Swamp region, especially in Perquimans and Pasquotank Counties. The efforts of county courts and militia had proven unsatisfactory, and so the new law added the profit motive. Any captor would receive twenty per cent of the sale value of the fugitive apprehended.<sup>1</sup> This is the first mention of the profession of Dismal Swamp slave catcher, which became well known in the nineteenth century. The members of this trade, though they succeeded in blasting the hopes of freedom seekers and thus interfered with the growth of the Swamp population, hardly otherwise affected the maroons of the deeper Swamp. They could not become as expert in the ways of the Swamp as those for whom it was home, and would not enter the unknown interior.

In the decade between 1792 and 1802 the general struggle of the African American people for freedom entered a new phase. The military alliance with Great Britain had ended and in its place there came a new system of alliance, less productive for material of war but much more meaningful for psychological survival, for the community morale of the Black people. It was a Pan-African American revolution simultaneous in many lands of the Western Hemisphere. The people of



Haiti were winning their freedom from slavery and colonialism in a most intense war with the powers of Europe;<sup>2</sup> the maroons of Jamaica were engaged in their greatest war against English slavery; the Black Caribs or maroons of St. Vincent in the West Indies were fighting the same kind of war; the enslaved of other Caribbean islands were arising in insurrections in alliance with a fleet of Revolutionary France whose radical democratic program included the abolition of slavery; and in the United States massive slave insurrections were organized. The mode of communication among enslaved peoples in far-flung lands is not particularly mysterious. Servants listened to dinner conversations. There were many Black sailors on the ships which plied from port to port. Slaveholder refugees from Haiti in the United States were sometimes able to bring their servants with them.

Besides this Pan-American outreach, the new African American era was characterized by increased underground communications between the enslaved of distant places within the United States and efforts to coordinate slave insurrections in different regions.<sup>3</sup> Previously slave revolts in the United States had been local; now they were striving to be national.

There were three large insurrectionary attempts in the United States during this period, in 1792 to 1793, in 1800, and in 1801 to 1802. Their effects were felt in various parts of the country but these revolts centered on two regions, both in Virginia, the Piedmont or foothill country around the State capital Richmond, and the southern coastal region of the State near the Dismal Swamp. In the first of these insurrectionary plans, 1792-1793, 900 slaves of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, across Chesapeake Bay from the Dismal Swamp region, organized themselves into small units under the general command of a leader named Celeb, secretly constructed weapons, and engaged in talks with the slave communities across on the Dismal Swamp and Norfolk side of the Bay. Their plan was to cross over at night, join themselves to their brothers of the mainland, and blow up the arsenal at Norfolk. They were imbued with hope by the news from the Caribbean. The planter militia of the Eastern Shore and of Norfolk and Portsmouth on the mainland requested military supplies from the State government.<sup>4</sup>

This coastal organization sought to unite its plans with similar efforts inland, around Richmond. The two regions are eighty miles or more apart, a great distance before the coming of railroads, the equivalent of hundreds of miles in the later periods of transportation and communication. A letter was found by the planter authorities in Yorktown from "Secret Keeper Richmond to secret Keeper Norfolk" which said in part,

The great secret that has been kept so long in being with our own color has come nearly to a head . . . don't be feared have a good heart fight brave and we will get free.

There was a reference in this letter to communication with Charleston, South Carolina, and another similar letter was found addressed from Portsmouth in the Dismal Swamp region.<sup>5</sup>

The second of the three large insurrectionary organizations of this ten year period was Gabriel's Uprising in Richmond in 1800, one of the most famous of slave insurrections in African American history, along with the Denmark Vesey Revolt (Charleston, 1822) and Nat Turner's Revolt (Southampton County, Virginia, 1831). In 1800, after careful preparations and complete secrecy one thousand out of the probable thousands of participants gathered at an appointed place to begin the attack on Richmond, but were stopped by an unprecedented torrential rain which flooded the way. General Gabriel was captured in flight at Norfolk; most of the authorities, including Governor James Monroe, believed that the organization extended to other regions of Virginia besides Richmond. The Gabriel Uprising, like that of 1792-1793, was affected by its vision of insurrections throughout the West Indies.<sup>6</sup>

The third of these large organized efforts, in 1801 to 1802, began immediately after the execution of General Gabriel and his lieutenants. Its strategy centered, like the effort of ten years before, upon the Dismal Swamp or Norfolk region, and as before there was outreach between the enslaved of the coastal and interior regions. Like the 1792-1793 organizations, that of 1801-1802 among its goals sought to destroy Norfolk, the only real urban center of the region.

What with the efforts to communicate across great distances, especially between the Norfolk and Richmond regions, these three insurrections appear to be attempts to coordinate preparations and timing so that uprisings would be simultaneous. The insurrectionists of the coast in 1792 had hope for an insurrection in the Richmond region; Gabriel in 1800 had hoped for support elsewhere; and the insurrectionists of the coast in 1801 who had not arisen in time to assist Gabriel now hoped that the undetected members of Gabriel's Uprising would join them in a new attempt. The three uprisings appear to express a developing process: communities of the enslaved had progressed to the point of communicating and planning between regions, but had not overcome the terrible obstacles to continuous reliable communication or synchronized simultaneous action by laborers with little privacy and time of their own.

The Dismal Swamp region is central to these events. It along with the Eastern Shore was the locus of the first of these revolts. Gabriel fled



to Norfolk, and his movement had reached out far from Richmond. The third revolt was around the Swamp. It would be inevitable to suppose maroon participation as reason for the prominence of this region if it were not also true that this region is the maritime center of the upper South. Norfolk by this time had become an important seaport, and Portsmouth was rising in this trade. Here it was that American ships set sail for the West Indies while others returned, and ships of the West Indian colonies arrived and once more set off for the Islands. Many sailors of the American ships were Black, as were many of the West Indian crews. By visits to the other lands and through social contacts in the 'unruly' cosmopolitan harbor slum;<sup>7</sup> Black people of various lands had the opportunity to receive news of slave revolts and to discuss the prospect of general freedom. It is likely that Norfolk and Portsmouth were communication centers for the growth of the Pan-African American vision and morale. This alone then could explain the central part played by the region between 1792 and 1802, without recourse to the explanation of the presence of the Dismal Swamp and its maroons in the same region.

Undoubtedly this seaport Caribbean communication was a cause of the importance of the region at this time. But the presence of the Dismal Swamp maroon community and its heritage of guerrilla warfare was likely to have been a factor in the planning. Pan-African American vision and maroon skills in war made a powerful medicine.

The presence of the Dismal Swamp maroons in these regional and inter-regional insurrections only appears clearly in the events of 1801–1802. In these two years there were frequent guerrilla raids on the surrounding plantation lands from both the North Carolina and Virginia sectors of the Swamp. The war bands were both Black and white, the latter probably the Scratch Hall folk or their Virginia equivalent. The commander in the Virginia sector was a Captain Jeremiah; the commander in North Carolina and general of all the maroon bands was an African American, Tom Copper. His headquarters was a maroon settlement in the Swamp behind Elizabeth City, North Carolina, the county seat of Pasquotank County, east of the Scratch Hall settlements. General Copper sometimes took personal command in the north of the Swamp as well; there was a price on his head in Virginia.<sup>8</sup>

Operations reached their height in May of 1802. The militia of Norfolk County, Virginia, was called up and in the field during April and May. In the latter month a war band attacked the jail at Elizabeth City to free captured comrades and engaged in battle with the Pasquotank militia around the County Courthouse. The Norfolk, Virginia press declared that it would be dangerous to publish more details of the fighting either in North Carolina or Virginia:

The particulars, we are constrained to observe, must be withheld for the present, from motives of precaution. It may not, however, be improper to remark that too much vigilance cannot be used in our own neighborhood.<sup>9</sup>

Though the Dismal Swamp maroons were so active, the insurrection was also of plantations slaves as had been the uprisings of 1792 and 1800, perhaps mainly so, at least in terms of numbers involved. A Black spy for the planter authorities reported that there were widespread secret meetings of the enslaved to plan strategy and fast messengers sent far to arouse the neighborhoods and regions:

... their has been expresses going In Every direction for some days to see all the negroes they could this holladay to make the arrangements and conclud what time it was to commence and at what plasis they are to assemble . . .<sup>10</sup>

In North Carolina the insurrectionary organization was noted in three of the five Dismal Swamp counties, Camden, Currituck and Pasquotank, as well as the borderline County of Bertie. It is doubtful that old Chowan County of Creole and maroon fame was not involved, since six years earlier in 1796 the Chowan Grand Jury had declared the County to be in "great peril and danger" from numerous escaped slaves, widespread arson, and the news of insurrections in the West Indies. Besides the Dismal Swamp counties six other plantation counties of North Carolina are named as active in the insurrection of 1801-1802. In Virginia three of the four Dismal Swamp counties were active, Nansemond, Princess Anne and Norfolk; it is likely that there was also activity in Isle of Wight since that County was to be the center of rebellion three years later. Like North Carolina, counties of Virginia beyond the Dismal Swamp region were involved. As on the previous two movements of this period, the far-off Richmond region was included: the militia there were mobilized and in the field during June and July.<sup>11</sup>

With clear evidence of Dismal Swamp maroon leadership in this insurrection, reports of the earlier movements indicate maroon participation in them as well. During the 1792-1793 insurrection the Norfolk County militia commander in his request for State aid stated that the insurrection centered not at Norfolk Town or the nearby plantations in the north County but "in the lower parts of the County," which is the Dismal Swamp.<sup>12</sup> And thirty or forty years later aged



spiritual leaders of the Dismal Swamp maroon community said that they had participated in the Gabriel Uprising of 1800.<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy from this evidence that Black maroons and tawny or white maroons fought side by side, and under a Black commander-in-chief. It is more noteworthy that the maroon army and the underground organization of the plantation slaves joined forces. It is one thing for an escaped slave to seek refuge with the maroons, or for maroons to liberate slaves during a plantation raid, and quite another thing for maroons and slaves to trust each other enough to plan and fight in concert. Aptheker's painstaking chronology of slave insurrections and Black guerrilla campaigns throughout the United States during the entire slavery period shows that the guerrilla campaigns often occurred in the lulls between the peaks of plantation insurrections, for whatever reason. It would not be surprising if some maroons viewed plantation slaves with feelings of superiority, and if some plantation slaves viewed maroons as wild people. But if such prejudices existed, they were transcended.

From the standpoint of immediate results, freedom for all or for many, the decade 1792-1802, like much of African American history was a time of defeat and bloody reprisals. But it was a great decade for the African American people in what it showed of their progress as a community. There was a new sense of Black presence throughout the Western Hemisphere. Communications within the United States, however inadequate, had been opened up between the enslaved in far-flung regions. The perspective for revolt and freedom from now on would be national rather than local or regional. The vast but restricted Black community in bondage and the small but formidable Black community of the wilderness had shown that they could work together as one people. In this process the importance of wilderness sanctuaries and maroon communities for the long range struggle for freedom was demonstrated to the enslaved of plantations and towns. And the maroons, now closer to their brothers outside, were more ready for their eventual joining of the general African American community after the Civil War.

Following this decade of massive slave organization joined to maroon guerrilla warfare, the latter did not diminish but continued and grew in audacity and impact until it reached a new height twenty years later.

Insurrectionary activity was reported from Isle of Wight County in 1805, from both ends of the Swamp, Norfolk and Chowan Counties, in 1808, and from Isle of Wight and Norfolk Counties in 1810.<sup>14</sup> In the North Carolina plantation country adjoining the Dismal Swamp, planters continued from year to year to be disturbed by "distressing

apprehensions of fire and other casualties." In 1807 planter citizens at the old county seat of Chowan County, Edenton, considered the establishment of a Black Code, a curfew regulation, and a patrol of "vigilant and trusty men." The next year the latter was organized, to protect, according to a supporter, "our wives and children surrounded by desperadoes, white and black."<sup>15</sup> Desperadoes, white and black, is a phrase which indicates that the attacks were from maroons as well as the citizens' own slaves. This phrase also demonstrates that the Black Code would be more precisely termed a Black and Tan Code. The white maroons referred to are probably the tawny folk of Scratch Hall, that southwest sector of the Swamp with which, of all counties, Chowan County is most congruent.

The paramount chief of the maroons at this time was General Peter II of Isle of Wight County, which figures so prominently in the reports of attacks. ~~He is Peter II~~ because of the other Chief Peter of that County a century earlier. The new General Peter though his home settlement was in Isle of Wight commanded the maroon forces throughout the Swamp.<sup>16</sup>

Peter II's administration sought to build on the groundwork laid by his predecessor General Tom Copper. General Copper had led massive campaigns in conjunction with slave insurrectionists. General Peter's aim was to institutionalize this relationship between maroons and enslaved, so that cooperation would be not a thing from time to time, but a permanent condition. To this end he sought to utilize in his region an institution found throughout African American slave society in North America and the West Indies: the underground plantation spiritual leader of the slave quarters.<sup>17</sup>

These "slave preachers," chosen by their fellows in bondage, unrecognized by any white church, often unknown and usually disapproved by the slaveholders, preached a faith and worship very different from those of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Also in the society of the enslaved there were conjure men or conjure women, sorcerers or folk psychotherapists who helped the sick to uncross or cast off their spells of depression, hysteria or obsession.<sup>18</sup> On some plantations, especially the smaller, these two branches of spiritual assistance, congregational leadership and private consultation, were probably often practiced by the same gifted person.

There is some indication that before Peter II's plan for the utilization of the plantation spiritual leaders, they had maintained communication among themselves as best they could, with a central headquarters for Virginia and North Carolina inside the Dismal Swamp. Though they had undoubtedly acted as a "Chaplains Corps" in the struggles for freedom, giving their blessings and moral support, the



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purpose of their efforts at communication and maintaining of a central council had been professional rather than political or military.<sup>19</sup> Contact between the headquarters of these spiritual leaders in the Swamp and the paramount military-political leaders of the maroon community must be presumed. The process at this time of seeking to utilize the plantation preachers and conjure men more systematically may have been arrived at jointly by the spiritual council and General Peter.

Peter II's purpose was to establish a network of agents on the plantations of eastern Virginia and North Carolina for political-military communications, planning and eventual coordinated action. The underground preachers and conjure men would add these functions on a regular basis to their old and primary spiritual functions. The goal, as one of General Peter's supporters stated it, was that "There'll be an earthquake on the same night" throughout the region. *good*

A report, stating the existence, importance and significance of "slave preachers," their role in slave insurrections, and plans under General Peter to perfect their modes of communication, was presented by a leading planter to the Government of Virginia. The State printed one hundred copies of the report for distribution to county militia commanders east of the mountains.<sup>21</sup> Many persons suspected of being "plantation preachers" were arrested. Following the campaign the responsible planter expert thought "it probable we have broken the chain by which they were linked."<sup>22</sup> He was correct; at least there was no more joint planning of regional scope between maroons and plantation slaves known until the Civil War. Both the enslaved and the maroons were to pay a grievous price for their lack of mutual communication at the time of the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831. ✓

It has been mentioned that this General Peter, the Dismal Swamp maroons' greatest known political genius in the leading of the African American people towards fuller community, bore the same name as a former chieftain of the Dismal Swamp. The number of coincidences pertaining to these two men is extraordinary: Both bore the same name Peter; both held the same office; both maintained their headquarters in the same county of the nine Dismal Swamp counties, Isle of Wight; and the date of office of Peter II is exactly one hundred years after the date of office of Peter I, 1810 and 1710.<sup>23</sup> Rather than these being a series of accidents, is it more probable that Peter II was named for Peter I? The earlier Peter is the first Dismal Swamp maroon chief whose name is recorded, even before the entry into the Swamp of the Tuscaroras and Roanoke settlers. If the maroons of 1810 also considered that Peter to have been the first chief of the Swamp, then the centennial celebration of the first chief could well have included the assumption of his name by the reigning paramount chief. ★

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African culture does not include the concept of reincarnation as held in the Hindu and Buddhist religions, that is, the rebirth of all souls into new persons until their eventual salvation. But African culture (specifically West African, that held by most ancestors of African Americans) does very much hold to a belief in the benign, strength-giving possession of a worthy living person by the deified Spirit of a deceased hero. Peter moreover is one of the Bible names given to African Holy Spirits in Haiti, Brazil, Surinam and the United States, in this case to Legba, the messenger of the Spirits.<sup>24</sup> Since the first function of Peter Legba is the bearing of messages, the protection of those who must pass through gates and travel the byways amid dangers, He would be a most appropriate Patron Spirit for that General of the Swamp whose political program was the strengthening of communications. His bearing of the name Peter then would hold spiritual meaning as well as historical commemorative purpose. It is certain that Peter II moved in this mystical thought world, since his associates in the plan for a firmer system of communication were the spiritual leaders of the slave quarters.<sup>25</sup>

Though the plan for a permanent and more systematic network of communications between the plantations and the maroons did not survive the reign of Peter II, the maroons' own war against slavery continued to mount in fury. In 1811, there was a battle around a maroon settlement; two maroons were killed, the rest escaped; the militia found a great quantity of spoils of war cached at the settlement from the plantations which this band had raided.<sup>26</sup> A year after the outbreak of the War of 1812 the British Navy blockaded Chesapeake Bay and continued the blockade until the end of the War in 1815. A major land invasion was made at Seatack, Virginia (now Virginia Beach), the shore adjacent to the Dismal Swamp, and the attack was extended inland to the Swamp. Numerous brief shore contacts were made during these years by H.M.S. Plantagent. Many Black people, as during the American Revolution, joined themselves in alliance with the British.<sup>27</sup> Scores of members of the resistance were in the prisons of the region; guerrillas strengthened by British arms raided the plantation country; Edenton the old seat of Chowan County was attacked by maroon war bands more than once.<sup>28</sup>

As at the end of the American Revolution there was no lessening of guerrilla warfare after the withdrawal of British allies. During 1818 a Black company of thirty maroons together with a company of white or tawny maroons brought terror to the plantations of Princess Anne County in Virginia.<sup>29</sup> Though most Dismal Swamp maroon war bands were now African American, some were still composed of "yellow" folk who in the North Carolina side of the Swamp had been called the



Scratch Hall people; this kind of maroon was no longer restricted to that side of the Swamp.<sup>30</sup>

In one of the Princess Anne engagements of 1818 the Captain and one of the soldiers of the African American company were captured. Their captors discovered that the latter was an aged woman, a possible hint of the role of women and the aged in maroon society.<sup>31</sup>

With the activity of so many maroon companies the names of many officers became known to their enemy, and it is therefore difficult for a few years to distinguish which officer was considered commander-in-chief. Perhaps with the intensity of the warfare, the length of the reigns of the paramount chiefs had lessened, their deaths in battle or by hanging after capture following close on their assumption of office. In 1819 an officer called General Jackson was reported as captured. That year was a time of concerted planter counter-offensive, and if it were not for the total silence on planter casualties, and the maroon successes in following years, it would be necessary to take this campaign as a maroon defeat, so many were the casualties among maroon officers. The year is a reminder that throughout the history of the Dismal Swamp community death was as much the constant companion of the maroon as was victory. In one running battle a maroon company was pursued to its camp. In another battle a Captain Jack Stump was shot dead. In another a Captain Bristol was captured. In another a Captain Shadrack was killed.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1815 and 1822 one of the two most noted of maroon leaders was Captain Pompey Little, a towering, brawny man. In the time when so many captains were being lost to the enemy, he led his company in attack and retreat with such skill that patrols, police and militia were unable to capture him and his band during seven years of pursuit.<sup>33</sup>

Captain Little appears to have served part of the seven years as a company commander only, since the other most noted maroon leader seems to have succeeded or preceded him as paramount chief during the same period. This was Captain Mingo. He had left the 'free' Black community to join the maroons: free Black and poor white people might find no place in a slavery society. Like Captain Little, Captain Mingo was long sought, but finally captured. While being transferred from the Norfolk jail to the State penitentiary in Richmond he was shot to death by those unwilling to risk the possibility that his penalty might be less than death.<sup>34</sup> Mingo is an obsolete word of Algonquian origin meaning a member of an Iroquois-speaking Nation. There is in the Dismal Swamp a neighborhood called Black Mingo Pocosin (Pocosin meaning a swampy area).<sup>35</sup> The word Mingo in this place

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name and the name of the Black chieftain suggests that the Tuscarora heritage was still a part of maroon culture. ✓

In 1823 and 1824 the guerrilla war reached its greatest height between the American Revolution and the Civil War. The Norfolk Herald declared that members of planter society around the Swamp

have for some time been kept in a state of mind peculiarly harassing and painful, from the too apparent fact that their lives are at the mercy of a band of lurking assassins, against whose fell designs neither the power of the law, or vigilance, or personal strength and intrepidity, can avail. These desperadoes are negroes (*sic*) (commonly called outlyers) . . . Their first object is to obtain a gun and ammunition, as well to procure game for subsistence as to defend themselves from attack, or accomplish objects of vengeance.<sup>36</sup>

It makes sense that a newly escaped slave, after recovering from his ordeals and being taught the ways of the Swamp, would be sent forth to fetch his own gun and ammunition. It would be his final examination prior to full initiation. The Norfolk paper seems to have some insight into the maroons, not only as guerrillas, but as a community.

The General of the maroon guerrillas at this time was Bob Ferebee, who bore one of the oldest non-Native American names of the Dismal Swamp region. It may be significant that the historian of ancient Pasquotank County calls the Ferebees a "clan."<sup>37</sup> For one branch of the Ferebees was one of the first families of the white upper South, producing notable figures in government and the professions, including the County Surveyor who laid out the City of Norfolk, the only city of the region, in 1680,<sup>38</sup> a nineteenth century U.S. Representative and Senator from North Carolina, and a twentieth century scholar of the University of Virginia whose specialty was the sociology of the contemporary Dismal Swamp region.<sup>39</sup> At the same time the other branch of the Ferebees became one of the first families of the Dismal Swamp maroons. It included the Chief of Maroons most ingenious in his development of military-political strategy, and Auntie Ferebee, a female figure of awe and power in the spiritual lore of the maroons.<sup>40</sup> Back in 1774 when the last of the Yeopims migrated from North Carolina, the name of their ancient capital Culong was changed to Indian Town, a name still used for the neighborhood in both Currituck and Camden Counties.<sup>41</sup> But thirty-five years later Thomas Cooper Ferebee, the most prominent of the white Ferebee clan of his day, named his plantation, located in Indian Town, Culong.<sup>42</sup> Is there a



historical law of the conservation of energy, applicable to certain stubbornly conservative depths of society, to the effect that nothing of significance can be destroyed?

The directions taken by the families of old Roanoke must have been manifold: some merging into the society of new North Carolina and Virginia; many tenaciously holding to old settler ways and community identification though it led them into the depths of the Dismal Swamp or the outer margin of American society; and others painfully maintaining some identity in both societies.

✓ At the time of General Robert Ferebee's regime, guerrilla activity took on a new refinement. Attacks on the general social enemy were narrowed to operations against especially selected targets. Now the plantations were selected for burning or plundering which belonged to slaveholders who had earned a special reputation for extreme brutality, or to public figures who defended the institution of slavery with unbridled zeal. Such persons would receive a message from the General of Maroons: Stay in at night! And they did, or left the region. Those who did not were gunned down on the way between plantation and town, or on the porches of their mansions. Patrols and police unavailing, the militia in large numbers were called out in the campaigns against the maroon troops and the searches for Bob Ferebee. He eluded them for six years before capture, sharing the frequent fate of his predecessors and successors in the office of commander of the maroon forces.<sup>43</sup>

After twenty years of increasing maroon power evidenced by the ever more numerous and audacious raids from the Swamp, planters in the 1820s were thoroughly alarmed lest the Dismal Swamp become a point of "assembly" for the slave population, that is, base and goal for concerted slave insurrection in the upper South. They needed only to hear of the thousands of Black people in plantation bondage who had joined Denmark Vesey in the South Carolina insurrection of 1822 to shudder at the thought of the possible outcome of such a plantation uprising near a sanctuary as large and impenetrable as the Dismal Swamp. The fear of such a use of the Great Swamp came close to realization as the next decade began.<sup>44</sup> ✓

The scene of America's best known slave insurrection, the Nat Turner Revolt of 1831, was Southampton County, Virginia, twenty-five miles from the edge of the Dismal Swamp. This is not as close as it sounds to contemporary ears conditioned by recent modes of transportation, but it is close enough to be counted then as near the Dismal Swamp. Yet Nat Turner and the maroons did not work together in this insurrection. Nat Turner himself stated that he had no allies beyond his neighborhood; this could be a statement to protect others,

except that it is corroborated by his not taking his fellow slaves of Southampton County into his confidence until the time of the revolt. The Virginia and United States authorities who panicked and responded with 'overkill' expected a Dismal Swamp connection, but found none. And historians of this event, however they have disagreed on other interpretations of Nat Turner and his revolt, have agreed that he had no allies.<sup>45</sup>

That there was no joint plan is a staggering fact, and most frustrating in its defiance of explanation. Perhaps for twenty years the heroic efforts of maroons and plantation slaves to coordinate their efforts, so dramatic in 1801-1802 and so energetically promoted by General Peter II in 1810, had fallen into disuse. The fury of maroon warfare after the War of 1812 could be an indication of an emphasis on guerrilla tactics counterproductive to long-range planning with necessarily slower and more cautious folk. If so, during these two decades old habits could have crept back: the social distance between maroons and plantation slaves. ✓

Another clue to the explanation of the failure of joint action between Nat Turner and the maroons may lie in the nature of his revolts as compared to others. The Gabriel and Denmark Vesey insurrections were highly organized with large numbers of members gathered long ahead of time; Nat Turner's followers were gathered along the road on the day of devastation. Gabriel and Denmark Vesey were secular leaders, military or political; they included spiritual leaders among their followers in charge of morale, not strategy. Nat Turner was a spiritual leader, whose visions may have affected the practical side of his plan and his reliance on spontaneity. It is difficult to imagine that Gabriel or Denmark Vesey would not have reached out to the maroon community, or that their outreach would not have been reciprocated enough for some note in the records.

Though there was no joint plan between insurrectionists and maroons, Nat Turner and his followers did intend, if defeated, to retreat into the Dismal Swamp. This is the testimony of some of his captured followers, and of leaders inside the Dismal Swamp during the next decades.<sup>46</sup>

No confirmation of anything regarding the Nat Turner Revolt can be obtained from the general actions and words of the Southern and U.S. authorities at the time of the uprising. The upper South, its planter and Anglo-Saxon society, was in total unreasoning panic: a monstrous Black superman was still on the loose, a gigantic Black army was still in the field or about to regather, a general slave revolution was breaking forth throughout the whole country. Against what was in fact a small band quickly defeated, the militia of Virginia

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and North Carolina mobilized and marched, the United States Army was ordered in from distant bases, and even the United States Navy tried to sail up the rivers. In the vicinity of Southampton County there was a general massacre of African Americans, most of which population knew nothing of the uprising. The magnitude of the bloodbath can never be known, since those who did the killing were later ashamed of their foolish destruction of so much valuable property. Amid such nightmares there is no use in searching for any evidences of reality.

But the pattern of reaction of local planter forces around the Dismal Swamp was so different from that of the rest of the country that it may be examined for indications of the use of the Swamp as a refuge by the fleeing Black people of Southampton County. Instead of marching or preparing to march to Southampton County with the rest of the Anglo-Saxon upper South, the militias of Nansemond, Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties, reinforced by a unit of the Army, were ordered to stand guard at the northwestern edge of the Swamp to prevent the escape of Nat Turner's band into that sanctuary.<sup>47</sup> The militia was well aware of maroons inside available to guide fugitives; these local planter troops were probably the source of the estimate made at this time of maroon population at two to three thousand persons,<sup>48</sup> the most solid estimate made during the time of the maroons and one which is compatible with the impression of guerrilla numbers with the addition of women, children and others not given to military pursuits.

Soon after the militia had stationed themselves at the edge of the Swamp there was a report that fugitives were succeeding in eluding them and entering the Swamp, and some far-away official sent an urgent command to the militia to pursue the fugitives into the Swamp. They tried, but were frustrated by the labyrinth from capturing more than a few of the new fugitives or old maroon settlers.<sup>49</sup>

The militia were successful in apprehending twelve Black persons who were unable to give satisfactory accounts of themselves and who were accused of trying to enter the Swamp. Perhaps these were the same twelve later released by the Norfolk County Court on proof of their identity. In Nansemond County another forty African Americans were arrested near the edge of the Swamp, again presumably not local residents or persons otherwise known to the authorities. Some of these were convicted as fugitives from Nat Turner's band.<sup>50</sup>

Eventually the authorities claimed that all followers of Nat Turner had been captured and tried. But at their defeat they had dispersed and fled "in every direction"; it is difficult to see how the courts could be sure whom they were trying or even how many should make up the docket, considering the general massacre and the total panic which had possessed Anglo-Saxon society. Moreover there were the families of

Nat Turner's men, and the Southampton Black population in general, who surely tried to flee the massacre. All in all it appears that fugitives from the defeated insurrection and its aftermath did flee to the Dismal Swamp, and therefore that some probably succeeded in their escape to the maroons. ✓

What were the maroons doing in the meantime? After learning or guessing what was occurring they were probably terribly anxious, spread out along the interior edge of the Swamp, hoping to encounter fugitives to guide inside before the intervention of a militia detachment. If they only learned of Nat Turner's attempt when they learned of his defeat, a diversionary military effort would have been of no use.

In later years three communities of the Dismal Swamp neighborhood, with differing values, the slaveholder and Anglo-Saxon society, the 'free' Black community, and the maroons, took a kind of local pride in the connection they believed there had been between their Swamp and the Nat Turner Revolt. In the late 1830s or 1840s an outstanding spiritual leader of the maroons, Father Gamby Gholar, made much of a close association between his people and Nat Turner and his followers.<sup>51</sup> With all the evidence against joint military action this can hardly mean that the maroons assisted in the insurrection. But Father Gholar's pride, however colored by maroon wishful thinking and guilt, suggests that fugitives did get through, and that maroons were of help to them.

Later, around 1850, another spiritual leader, of the 'free' Black community on the edge of the Swamp and perhaps also of the maroons, Father Alick, was wont to say that he possessed the mule which had borne fugitives from the insurrection into the safety of the Swamp, a young woman and her child. The story was not questioned by white observers who patronized him as a lovable old (darkey) character, by a white observer who sensed keen wisdom beneath his surface, or by the other Black residents who could have ended his story by denying it.<sup>52</sup>

The story of the relation between the Nat Turner Revolt and the Dismal Swamp maroons is not a noble one from the standpoint of the ongoing struggle for freedom. It must be set beside the events of 1801-1802: in African American History sometimes there was heroic overcoming of the objective and subjective obstacles to unity; sometimes there was tragic failure to become one people. The best that can be said of 1831 is that the maroons and Nat Turner did not work together, that the maroons probably did all they could to save the fugitives from that revolt, and that some perhaps were saved.

The alarm produced by the Nat Turner Revolt and the proximity of the revolt to the Dismal Swamp adversely affected the number of fugitives entering the Swamp<sup>53</sup> and the conduct of guerrilla warfare



during the next twenty years. Not one guerrilla raid is reported. This is the strongest corroboration to the report that these were the years in which the Dismal Swamp counties maintained an ongoing campaign to render the Swamp useless as a refuge. Militia, sheriffs' police and planters' patrols were active on a regular basis instead of waiting for emergencies to arise.<sup>54</sup> This was the heyday of the professional Dismal Swamp slavecatcher.<sup>55</sup> In 1848 there was even a surprise attack upon maroons inside the Swamp; some were captured.<sup>56</sup> Though the deeper portions of the Swamp were never penetrated, a *cordon-sanitaire* was established around the Swamp, with forays from time to time into the more accessible interior areas. There is no reason to doubt the assertion made in the 1850s that the maroon population had shrunk. That communities continued to exist is attested by the renewed activity of maroons both Black and tawny after 1851 and especially after 1860.

It is reasonable to see the tightened security precautions of the slaveholders as a response to the nearby Nat Turner Revolt and the almost simultaneous organization of the new Abolitionist movement led by William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. What is more difficult to assign a cause to is their relaxation of vigilance and the maroons' renewal of guerrilla warfare after 1851. Perhaps the relaxation was an unthinking celebration of the series of political victories won by the slavery interest in the federal government of the United States, beginning with the ferocious Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. In the 1850s the African American people, in particular the 'free' Black people, from the same political events sensed an impending crisis, which feeling could have reached the maroons, impelling them to new effort. Or the change may simply reflect a cycle of activity, rest and renewed activity, operating on both the slaveholder and maroon societies.

The name of no general or captain of maroons is known for these two decades of the 1830s and 1840s. Were the communities then without charismatic leaders to look to as focus and symbol of their common interests? It is interesting that at this period appear two of the most outstanding spiritual leaders of the interior Dismal Swamp, and their appearance instead of the names of war chiefs may be significant to the political history of the maroons. Students of European social history have suggested that when revolutionary periods end and periods of reaction take their place, the former revolutionary movement often becomes a religious movement (of the revolutionary class). It would be understandable if something similar occurred in the Dismal Swamp. With no great need for war chiefs, it would be natural for the spiritual figures of the community to step forward to fill the leadership gap. They had stood at the right hand of the war chiefs in the days of military-political leadership, to bless the community in its efforts.

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1831 to 1851 may have constituted an era of community leadership by spiritual functionaries inside the Dismal Swamp.

One of these spiritual leaders was Father Gamby Gholar, chief of a group of holy men among the maroons, who directed the practitioners of African mysticism, a religion of spiritual Powers and a sorcery for benign purposes. This was an old and highly organized endeavor which reached out beyond the Swamp to the open lands of Virginia and North Carolina. This organization, with its headquarters in the Swamp, undoubtedly caused its leader to be a person of prestige among the maroons at all times. It is roughly between 1840 and 1850 that we hear of Father Gholar, now an aged seer. He had held his spiritual office for some thirty years, back to 1810 or 1820. He spoke much and highly of Nat Turner and the events of 1831 and may have become the leading community figure among the maroons after that year.<sup>57</sup>

The other spiritual leader of the Dismal Swamp during the period 1831 to 1851 was the Reverend Alick, a Black Methodist minister and the fulfiller of many other roles as well. He spent part of his time inside the Swamp, and part outside. The first mention of him is in the 1850s, but he is apparently already a well established 'sight' of the Swamp country for visitors, a 'colorful old character'. However old he may have been (and his portrait does not indicate great old age) he must have been considerably younger than Gamby Gholar, since the Reverend Alick was still functioning in the 1870s. As minister of the Black Methodist church, an organization highly loyal to the welfare of the African American people, his usual preaching was to the 'free' Black community, unless he made unadmitted missionary journeys to the maroon settlements. If he did not, he was failing his call to spread the Good News. A visiting artist of national fame heard him preach, and found his gift a real one, fluent, eloquent and moving.

Father Alick earned his regular income as Postman of the Swamp, delivering between Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound and to the small shingle (lumber) camps along that narrow line of the outside world which ran through the Swamp, the Dismal Swamp Canal. His constant movement from point to point was ideal for the communication of news and messages among the various settlements and segments of the Black community near or in the Swamp. And his office of minister, one historically central to the African American community in the United States, would have impelled him to perform the urgent unofficial function of news disseminator and bearer of unwritten messages.

Father Alick was also a bee hunter, a profession not uncommon on the frontier and in other wilderness regions; he would compute the location of a hive from the bee lines of two insects' returning home



from different points, make his way through the swamp to that location, and there, using techniques of the craft to protect himself from the swarm, remove the honey comb for sale outside the Swamp. This work required entry into the deeper Dismal Swamp away from the edge of the Canal, and shows that he knew the ways in, and out again. The work explained to onlookers his frequent excursions into the Swamp, and if he returned empty handed, why then he had been unsuccessful in his hunt for bees.

Father Alick was also the owner of the aged animal whom people called "Nat Turner's Mule." White 'wits,' showing off "Uncle Alick" to visitors, believed or pretended to believe that the animal was the mule Nat Turner had ridden during the Revolt. Such onlookers, sensing the importance of Father Alick but unable to handle it save by racist 'humor,' went on to allow that "Uncle Alick" claimed the mule could fly, that he complained that sometimes he had to coax the mule down from the top of a tree. A serious and sincere reporter upon questioning Father Alick learned that the mule had carried a young mother and child to safety in the Swamp from the massacre following the failure of the insurrection of 1831. Behind the stereotyped tomfoolery about a 'darkey' who said his mule could fly, apparently lay the facts that if the animal did bring its riders twenty-five miles through the armies and mobs of Virginia, then through the militia lines at the edge of the Swamp, and finally to the secret entrances to the Swamp, it surely could "fly." An animal of rescue from Southampton in 1831 could only have attached to it some of the charisma of the venerated Nat Turner. As for the picture of the mother and child in flight upon the mule, it could only arouse in the minds of the empathetic and Bible-conscious the image of Mary and the little Jesus in flight from Herod.

Father Alick protected himself from the charge of knowing escaped slaves by explaining that he had come into the possession of the mule about a year after its arrival. One wonders if the child grew up within the Swamp, how he was viewed by the maroons, and what became of him.

As to Father Alick, Methodist minister, Postman of the Dismal Swamp, bee hunter and possessor of a living memory of Nat Turner, there was even more to this man than met the eye, thought the sensitive artist from the North who met him. He saw in the unassuming, patient little man a high intellect and the sharpness of a "steel-trap."<sup>58</sup>

Whatever Father Alick was to the Black community, he had been at it a long time, receiving his call to a special work and beginning the accumulation of his complex career in 1815. It had reached the point described before the 1850s when his person and work were first reported

by an outsider. If the fabulously aged Father Gamby Gholar had died in the 1840s, Father Alick would have been an understandable figure for the maroons to turn to in their need for a symbolic leader. One should not read back into the world of the maroons and their friends the ideological enmities of other peoples and times: the African Spiritism of Gamby Gholar, the Black Methodism of the Reverend Alick, and the Islam of the next paramount chief of maroons Osman may have been to many persons complimentary blessings rather than incompatible doctrines. In the twenty year interim when there was no war chief of maroon guerrillas perhaps these two priestly figures Father Gholar and Father Alick were the perceived leaders, the chief elders, of the maroon community in a time of waiting.

In 1852 there was great alarm among the planters of Princess Anne County. Their patrol had come upon an unauthorized, secret mass meeting of Black people, and dispersed it. Following this, fires broke out upon the same night on the plantations of the members of the patrol.<sup>59</sup>

During the decade of the 1850s, raids upon plantations were resumed by war bands from the Swamp. Captain Jack Mobaly was leader of one company.<sup>60</sup>

The first known general of the Swamp in twenty years was Osman. An illustrator and journalist who visited the Dismal Swamp in 1856 caught a glimpse of the maroon commander, and drew a striking illustration of this personage, militant and desperate, peering from the reeds. The reporter's word sketch gives the flavor of the portrait:

About thirty paces from me I saw a gigantic negro (*sic*), with a tattered blanket wrapped about his shoulders, and a gun in his hand. His head was bare, and he had little other clothing than a pair of ragged breeches and boots. His hair and beard were tipped in gray, and his purely African features were cast in a mould betokening, in the highest degree, strength and energy. The expression of his face was of mingled fear and ferocity, and every movement betrayed a life of habitual caution and watchfulness.

The maroon commander was on some dangerous mission to the vicinity of the outside world. His observer had entered into the Swamp a bit, searching for a settlement of shingle maroons near the Canal. When his two guides, Black employees (gitters) of the shingle Company, saw the portrait forming under the artist's pencil, they inadvertently gasped, "Osman! Osman!" The artist questioned them but



regaining their composure they answered, no sir, we don't know anything about him.<sup>61</sup>

This was Osman, known by rumor to others of the region, the "king of the swamp," the protector of escaped slaves.<sup>62</sup>

Osman is an Islamic name. Arab children are likely to be given this name in memory of the third Caliph, successor to the Prophet Muhammad of Arabia as head of the Islamic community. Turkish parents are likely to give the name to commemorate the founder of the Ottoman or Osmanli Empire. But in West Africa since the beginning of the nineteenth century the name has been given in reverent honor of Osman (Uthman) dan Fodio, who in 1804 proclaimed a Holy War, united the Fulani people, won the oppressed classes of other peoples, in particular the Hausas, and created a militant Muslim Empire which for a generation was much filled with missionary zeal for the Faith of Muhammad.<sup>63</sup>

While Osman dan Fodio's Holy War was in progress in West Africa, Fulanis and Hausas of Brazil in the name of Allah led massive slave insurrections and planned to establish Bahia Province as an Islamic Sultanate. At the same time in Jamaica Muslims organized slave insurrections, corresponded among themselves in Arabic, and opened communications with Muslim leadership in West Africa.<sup>64</sup>

His name indicates that General Osman of the Dismal Swamp maroons was a Muslim, his name as an African that his family had been zealous adherents of the Fulani-led revival of Islam and Holy War against infidelity and the oppression of the poor. Judging from his portrait and written description, "hair and beard . . . tipped in gray," Osman of the Swamp was about fifty, or in his late forties, the age to have been born when Osman dan Fodio proclaimed the Holy War, or within the next several years.

A scholar of African history who is a specialist in the experiences of Africans in the Western Hemisphere has raised the question: Were the Muslim-led slave revolts of Brazil and Jamaica, which occurred at the time of Osman dan Fodio, related to the Holy War in West Africa?<sup>65</sup> Now the paramount chieftaincy of Osman of the Dismal Swamp must be included in the question.

If the special needs of the Dismal Swamp maroon community in the 1850s had been spiritual, a paramount chief of zealous and strict Muslim faith would have presented a problem. The majority of Africans who had come to America had been believers in the Holy African Spirits, not Muslims. Most maroons like other African Americans were believers in their own form of Christianity, often including continued veneration of the traditional Holy Spirits; some probably included with their veneration of the Holy Spirits a liberal or lax form of Islam; few

could have been strict Muslims, since the Atlantic slave trade of the United States had become an illegal and therefore smaller commerce by the time of the Muslim revival in West Africa. Most non-Muslim maroons would have accepted Muslims, but strict Muslims would have shown intolerance for religious beliefs and practices of others, however united they might be with the majority on matters of community welfare.

If the special task of the maroon community in this period had been political, outreach to the plantation people or alliance with some military power of European culture, the strict faith of a Muslim paramount chief would have also presented problems: rapport with the majority of plantation people, or optimum conversations with an allied power of 'Christian culture'.

But the special task of the 1850s was the restoration of guerrilla warfare, after the lapse of two decades. For this General Osman's Islam was no disadvantage; indeed the reputation for militancy of his background was probably an asset.

The efforts to renew the war against slavery were successful. As of old, maroon war bands disrupted commerce on the Dismal Swamp Canal and the stage roads around the Swamp, and assisted African Americans from slavery on the plantations into the depths of the Swamp and a new life.<sup>66</sup>

As a result, by the end of the decade the maroon population of the Swamp both non-combatant and combatant was growing larger again.<sup>67</sup> This growth and the experience of a new generation of maroons in guerrilla warfare under the leadership of Osman were to prove most useful to the maroon community in their military alliance with the United States of America against the Confederate States of America during the 1860s.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> U. S. House of Representatives, Manumission Petition, in Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, 2 vols., 6th ed. (New York: Citadel Press, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 40-41.



<sup>2</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), pp. 96–102.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213–14, 228, 230–31; Secret Keeper Richmond to Secret Keeper Norfolk, 1793, in Aptheker, *Documentary History*, vol. 1, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, pp. 210–212.

<sup>5</sup> Secret Keeper Richmond to Secret Keeper Norfolk, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, pp. 219–21. The chronological chapters of this work, rich with unanalyzed information, are an invaluable reference tool for inquiries into regions or periods.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 8, note 46.

<sup>8</sup> Jesse Forbes Pugh and Frank T. Williams, *The Hotel in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Old Trap, N.C.: Jesse F. Pugh, 1964), p. 77; Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), p. 127; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, pp. 158, 228–30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158, 228–30; Pugh and Williams, *Hotel*, p. 77; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 212.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 14, note 8.

<sup>14</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, pp. 145–46, 241, 243.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145–46

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich, Conn.: Premier Americana, Fawcett Publications, 1961), pp. 144–45; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), pp. 73–74; Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 9; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1976), pp. 215–24, 255–79.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 14, notes 1–18.

<sup>20</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 246.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246n.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 8, note 11.

<sup>24</sup> For Legba: E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 127; Melville J. Herskovits, "African Gods and Catholic Saints in New World Negro Belief," *The New World Negro* (n.p.: Minerva Press, 1966), pp. 323-24, 327; Herskovits, *Myth*, p. 237. Note that knowledge of biblical personages is not restricted to Catholic countries. For spirit possession: *Ibid.*, pp. 215-18, 223, 225-32; Courlander, *Drum and Hoe*, pp. 15-16; Donald Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 267, 281, 286, 300; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>25</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 246.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas C. Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County and Edenton, North Carolina* (Edenton, N.C. Chamber of Commerce, 1967), p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1959), vol. 2, p. 84; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 262n; "Slave Guerrilla Warfare," in Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), pp. 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1978), p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> See note 29 above.

<sup>32</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 157.

<sup>34</sup> William S. Forrest, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakeston, 1853), pp. 445-46.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 223. See also Chapter 10, note 57.

<sup>36</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 276.

<sup>37</sup> Jesse Forbes Pugh, *Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N.C.: n.p., 1957), p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 157-58.

<sup>39</sup> E. E. Ferebee, *Economic and Social Survey of Princess Anne County*, University of Virginia Record Extension Series, vol. 8, no. 9 (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia, 1924).

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 10, notes 59-60.

<sup>41</sup> Catherine Albertson, *In Ancient Albemarle* (Raleigh, N.C.: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914), p. 149.



<sup>42</sup> Currituck County Tricentennial Celebration, Historical Committee on Outstanding Citizens, 1670–1970, *Report* (n.p.: Currituck Historical Society, 1970), p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 276–77; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 157–58, 223.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas R. Gray, Afterword to Nat Turner, “The Confessions of Nat Turner,” in John B. Duff and Peter M. Mitchell, eds. *The Nat Turner Rebellion: The Historical Event and the Modern Controversy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 25–26; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 305.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Nat Turner’s Insurrection,” in Duff and Mitchell, *Nat Turner Rebellion*, pp. 56–57; William S. Drewry, “The Southampton Insurrection,” *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> Higginson, “Nat Turner’s Insurrection,” *Ibid.*, p. 60; Stephen Beauregard Weeks, “The Slave Insurrection in Virginia, 1831,” *Ibid.*, p. 74; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 159.

<sup>48</sup> Higginson, “Nat Turner’s Insurrection,” in Duff and Mitchell, *Nat Turner Rebellion*, p. 60; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 308.

<sup>49</sup> Carl D. Arfwedson, *The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1834*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), vol. 1 pp. 359–60.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 159; Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 307.

<sup>51</sup> See note 57 below, and Chapter 14, note 8.

<sup>52</sup> See note 58 below.

<sup>53</sup> John Hamilton Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines* (New York: Easton and Mains, 1906) p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 160.

<sup>55</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853–1854*, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), vol. 1, p. 117.

<sup>56</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 336.

<sup>57</sup> Martin R. Delany, *Blake, or the Huts of America: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States and Cuba* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 112–14. The description of this Dismal Swamp organization of conjure men will be found in Chapter 14, and a discussion of the validity of the source in note 2 of that chapter.

<sup>58</sup> David Hunter Strother, “The Dismal Swamp,” *Harper’s Monthly* (1856): 454–55; Robert Arnold, *The Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond* (Norfolk: n.p., 1888), pp. 25–27; Alexander Crosby Brown, *The Dismal*

*Swamp Canal* (n.p.: Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake Va., 1967), p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, p. 148.

<sup>60</sup> Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines*, p. 74.

<sup>61</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 453. The scholarly study of this artist and journalist who worked under the pseudonym Porte Crayon finds his work to be literal reporting with accurate details and without fictional trimmings, with this particularly applying to his North Carolina series of articles, of which "The Dismal Swamp" is a part. Cecil D. Eby, Jr., "Porte Crayon": *The Life of David Hunter Strother* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 92, 92n. Harriet Beecher Stowe took Osman as part of her inspiration for the novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891, original copyright 1856). Source: Hubert J. Davis, *The Great Dismal Swamp* (Richmond: Cavalier Press, 1962), p. 57. In her novel Mrs. Stowe joins the Swamp location of Osman to the insurrectionary plans of Nat Turner to form her character Dred. The book is said to have been a response to the criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as including too many submissive Black characters. An examination of *Dred* has not revealed any material towards a history of the maroons.

<sup>62</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 57.

<sup>63</sup> Basil Davidson, *A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1966), pp. 280-86.

<sup>64</sup> Ivor Wilks, "Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq of Timbuctu," in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), pp. 163-64; Pierson, *Negro in Brazil*, pp. 39-45.

<sup>65</sup> Wilks, "Abu Bakr," p. 163.

<sup>66</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines*, p. 17.



## Chapter 10

### “They Look *Strange*”: The Culture of the Dismal Swamp Maroons

The Great Dismal Swamp, one thousand square miles in area today, two thousand in the time of the maroons, is a most extraordinary swamp in its geological structure. The Swamp is on a hill, with seven rivers that arise from the ground and meander to the sea or bays without river beds, instead spreading out over all the land as in most flat swamps. The descent of the hill to sea level is so gradual however that the land is not drained and remains wet except for dry ‘islands,’ slightly elevated terrain. There are several notable features in the Swamp. In the northern, Virginia portion lies Lake Drummond, with a swampy heavily forested shoreline of twenty miles. A few miles north of Lake Drummond is a large waste or heath, drier than most of the Swamp, called Paradise Old Fields. South of Lake Drummond near the North Carolina line there was until a twentieth century fire an extensive area of giant reeds known as The Green Sea. And on the southern edge of the Swamp lies that large wilderness of mixed swamp and pine barrens, Scratch Hall.<sup>1</sup>

The few reasons for outsiders to approach the Dismal Swamp rarely occasioned their entry into the Swamp proper. From the seventeenth century the unusual acidity of the Dismal Swamp water was much prized by seafarers for its long-lasting freshness (free of micro-organisms), and sailors, landing at the beaches, would travel the short distance inland to fill their kegs from the edge of the Swamp in preparation for long ocean voyages.<sup>2</sup> If there was contact between the pirates and the land maroons this would have been a likely occasion. From the eighteenth century, timber operations, for the shipyards of Norfolk, were important, but these were largely on the exterior (north)

of the Swamp.<sup>3</sup> The canal through the Swamp, to connect Chesapeake Bay with Albemarle Sound, was completed for small canal boats in 1814 and for ships large enough to sail the bays in 1828. But the canal had little effect on accessibility to the deep Swamp: It was merely a new and interior edge of the Swamp with the wetlands a few hundred yards beyond the canal still untrodden and unknown. On the canal there was a small industry of shingle-cutting with camps along the banks and several 'shanty-towns' for the weekend revels of the shingle workers and any canal-boat passenger unlucky enough to be stranded. But the men of the shingle camps did not normally stray beyond the edge of the canal.<sup>4</sup> In the early nineteenth century on the canal at the Virginia-North Carolina state line there was a hotel, mainly it seems for the sick and vacationers of unusual tastes to drink the Swamp water, considered medicinal.<sup>5</sup> But unless there was something illicit about this hotel or some of its guests that we do not know, there was no reason to enter the Swamp away from the canal, and every reason not to. The Dismal Swamp should have been a 'hunters' paradise' with its vast quantity and variety of game for meat, furs and sport. But the immense difficulty and dangers of movement inside the Swamp and the famed wild beasts of the place, wildcats, wolves and peculiarly fierce varieties of bear and wild cattle, discouraged the would-be hunter and permanently frustrated the hunting potential of the Swamp—except for maroons.<sup>6</sup>

From time to time literary personages visited the vicinity of the Swamp and traveled through the canal and along the spur of the canal to Lake Drummond. Some are sources for the history of the maroons. The most famed literary popularizer of the Dismal Swamp is not a source. The Irish poet Thomas Moore's verse "The Lake of Dismal Swamp," though oft quoted in the nineteenth century, bears no relation to the folklore or culture indigenous to the region.<sup>7</sup>

The chief cause for the unsavory reputation that became attached to the Swamp, besides the English meaning attached to the French geographical term "*dismal*," was the description written in 1728 by William Byrd II, the first visitor to publish a report. Byrd fabricated frightening details: perpetual gloom, noxious fumes, a total absence of animal life, even the refusal of birds to fly over.<sup>8</sup> In fact for those who like any swamp scenery the Dismal Swamp is beautiful.

However striking to the eye, the Dismal Swamp is a tangle of confusion to any stranger who enters: pools, strips of wet land, higher ridges and islands, waterways, white pine, cypress, juniper and gum trees, reeds, canes, briars, bushes, vines and other vegetation thick at every hand.<sup>9</sup> Fallen trees and other dead plants do not quickly decay, due to the special quality of Dismal Swamp water, and thus the natural obstacles to movement are multiplied. Cause for danger is ever present:



ridges which suddenly end at vegetation-covered deep water; thick mud difficult to extricate oneself from; knee-deep holes covered with vegetation; quagmires held up only by the roots of plants which look no different from the solid land they adjoin.<sup>10</sup> There is no record, or hint, of any outsider, from afar or from the region around the Swamp, who journeyed without guide exploring the depths of the Swamp and returned to tell.

The Dismal Swamp was a political as well as geographical no-man's-land for outsiders. The Swamp prevented the surveying of jurisdictional lines. In 1724 an observer reported:

... the bounds between the colony of Virginia and the government of North Carolina are disputed: so that there is a very long list of land fifteen miles broad between both colonies (called the disputed bounds) in due subjection to neither; which, is an asylum for the runagates of both countries.

Until 1728 the Governors of Virginia and Proprietors of North Carolina did not know where one colony left off and the other began.<sup>11</sup> William Byrd II's surveying party was able to travel through the Swamp at the rate of one and a half miles a day, despite the advantage of an unusually dry season, the absence of any accident, no losing of the way, the stimulus of a dwindling food supply and the exercise of all possible diligence and resolution.<sup>12</sup> Until 1770 there was a part of Hatteras Banks adjoining Currituck County which was not in any county of either state due to the lack of surveys whose residents, not maroons but living openly, were subject to no taxes or other public duties.<sup>13</sup> In 1799 North Carolina established Gates County, though it lacked sufficient population, because the Dismal Swamp cut off what settlers there were from access to any existing courthouse in the State.<sup>14</sup> Until 1804 no county lines had been drawn between Camden and Gates Counties and Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties. Even when surveyors were able to get in, the Swamp hindered their work: the line mapped between the latter two counties in 1804 was found to be unusable.<sup>15</sup> Down to the twentieth century the boundary line between Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties was unknown.<sup>16</sup> And today a student of the Swamp, a local resident, can state that most of the thousand square miles of the Dismal Swamp, undrained and otherwise unimproved, are also still unknown, unexplored.<sup>17</sup> What a place, on the dry 'islands' of the interior, for African American archaeology!

Severe as were other problems for living in the Swamp, one problem maroons of the deep interior did not face: security at home.

The jungle, and chaos in police jurisdictions were the maroon's best friends.

The frequent figure guessed for maroon population, two thousand, would seem to derive from the militia estimate at the time of the Nat Turner Revolt, 1831.<sup>18</sup> If at any of the times of extensive guerrilla warfare few adult civilians were left at home, a smaller estimate would suffice. If at such times families were large and there were able bodied men, even entire settlements, that did not participate in those campaigns, a higher estimate of the total would be in order. We know the population varied from period to period: in the 1830s and 1840s it was less than at other times. There is also the ambiguity of distinguishing maroons, members of the community, from newly escaped slaves not yet 'naturalized.' For this reason the Buffaloes of the Civil War have been defined in this study as some maroons, with many recruits. Some who have thought upon the question of maroon population appear to have felt that the usual estimate is too conservative. The Irish Nationalist John Boyle O'Reilly who visited the edges of the Swamp stated that there was more to the maroons than known in Suffolk or Norfolk, much less in Richmond.<sup>19</sup> A writer of the early twentieth century believed that there had been "thousands" of maroons.<sup>20</sup> A contemporary student of the Dismal Swamp sees fit to state that a large population was possible, considering the area and plentiful supply of game.<sup>21</sup> Though there is no satisfactory basis for an estimate of population, there is no question that there was a permanent maroon community. Reports are substantiated by the later discovery of ruined settlements deep in the Swamp.<sup>22</sup>

The image of concentric circles of types of population may clarify the diversity of social groups of the Dismal Swamp and its neighborhood and demonstrate a variety of effects of the Swamp as a place of seclusion. In fact of course these 'concentric circles' overlapped and were otherwise uneven, but information on the settlements does show some such residential arrangement. There are 1) the central or deep interior of the Swamp; 2) the outer portions, closer to the edge; 3) the edge of the Swamp; 4) the outside areas of open countryside nearest to the edge of the Swamp, and 5) the plantation lands of the South, of the region and beyond.

In the Swamp depths were the settlements of those maroons most adjusted to swamp life and least interested in regular or frequent contacts with the outside world.<sup>23</sup> Raids and reception of new members may have been their only outside contacts. These would have been the most stable and largest of maroon settlements. A large 'island' with a good-sized and quite visible village would be safe here; closer to the edge a large island would be a landmark to outsiders, and any large settlement a



disaster. It is in the central Swamp that one would expect to find the fullest development of maroon culture, the longest and strongest survivals of African, Native American and British peasant culture.

The next 'circle' around the center, the outer portions of the Swamp, included areas not far from the central stretch of the canal. The swamp terrain here would be just as difficult and dangerous for outsiders to travel, but the outside would be more accessible to maroons. Here would live those who could not or would not as fully join in the ways of swamp living: there would be a higher proportion of relative newcomers. Settlements may have been smaller. The people were likely to maintain some regular contacts with the outside: social perhaps, and certainly economic, working marginally for conniving and canny employers, or ~~dangerously~~ engaged in too frequent and amateurish petty plunder. These were the only maroons likely to be seen by outsiders except in war.

On the very edge of the Swamp, where wet and dry wilderness met, and at swamp areas detached from the Dismal itself, lived the Scratch Hall people, not so much in hiding as in seclusion, yet a seclusion that could readily turn into hiding if the enemy appeared in force. Scratch Hall was on the southern edge: other tawny maroons principally of Native American and white descent may have also lived on the edge in the other quarters of the Swamp. If encountered by an outsider they could pretend to be 'tame' Poor Whites of the outside who had strayed in. ~~We know that the Scratch Hall people were firmly tied to the Black maroons of the interior as military associates and related in cultural interchange, but we do not know how customary it was for persons of Scratch Hall to visit the deep interior.~~<sup>24</sup>

On the outside of the Swamp but nearby lived 'rough' white settlers who were not maroons, not in hiding, not fugitives. They were usually small farmers or workers, often independent workers, for the timber industry of the Norfolk shipyards, or, in the open shanty towns of the canal, for the shingle industry. They were the 'go-betweens,' the buffers between maroons and Anglo-Saxon society. They profited a little from their discreet tolerance of the maroons, employing the more accessible in occasional work, at wages below the standard for common labor or hired-out slaves, or purchasing whatever maroons had to sell for resale farther outside. These persons, though basically members of Anglo-Saxon society, closed their eyes to newly escaped slaves who passed by, as well as to the established maroons.<sup>25</sup> Out of self interest they were neutrals. If they were related by family or true friends to maroons they did not publicize it, except for the son of one such person sixty years after. About 1910 "Cap'n Jack," a lock keeper on the canal, remembered his father, a strong Union sympathizer during the Civil

War, stealing into the Swamp before the War with provisions for fugitive slaves. Unable to read and write, Captain Jack is reported as telling visitors that he "belongs to the 'swamp folk.'"<sup>26</sup>

Finally, out beyond, there were the plantation lands of the South. The only difference between the plantations of the Dismal Swamp counties and those farther off was that the former were under threat of attack when not under attack. It would be interesting to compare real estate prices here and in the farther counties; the difference might explain why there were always planters in the region willing to keep on trying.

The swamp life was not a good life. The life of the peasant or townsperson of the British Isles in recent centuries is familiar enough to affirm readily and immediately that indentured servants would not enjoy life in any swamp. The same would have been true for Native Americans generally; their farms and familiar hunting grounds were a more comfortable environment than wetlands. As for Africans, the Swamp was not a pleasant place to spend an entire life as compared to the cities and commercial and agricultural society to which they were accustomed in West Africa. The swamp life would be easier for those born to it, but wild animals remained a threat and the difficulties of travel through such a terrain still constituted a danger to life and limb. Greater exposure to the elements and the ever present damp were probably more injurious to health than in the outside country. Insects of the Dismal Swamp were not particularly dangerous or obnoxious. There is a large biting yellow summer fly, but residents near the Swamp soon develop an immunity. The Dismal Swamp was never known for malaria; the fewness of mosquitoes was probably due to the ever flowing waters moving downhill from the center to the bays and sea.<sup>27</sup> Thus the maroons escaped the great endemic threat to health of the settlements and cities of Anglo-Saxon America in the Colonial era and the nineteenth century. The lack of decay in the Dismal Swamp was a help to comfort if not to health. The luxuriant vegetation constantly dying and falling into the water and wet ground, instead of decaying turned to peat.<sup>28</sup> This was due to the peculiar, bacteria-free water of the Dismal Swamp. This water of high acid content (and black in color) was self-purifying; the maroon always had the purest, safest drinking water on every hand wherever he went in his homeland. Whether or not Dismal Swamp water is actually medicinal, as outsiders who avidly sought it believed, has never been determined.<sup>29</sup>

Against the dangerous wild animals which so abounded, maroons must have taken special precautions, vigilance while traveling and the safeguarding of their homes. There was the consolation that these, like other difficulties of the Swamp, were deterrents to the approach of



outsiders. The Swamp also teemed with game animals, and the maroon livelihood was above all that of a hunter. Available to the maroon table were opossum and raccoon, venison, wild pig, wild goat, duck, partridges and pheasant, fish also of great quantity, especially the perch, considered by outsiders a great delicacy, when they could get it. The meat of the wild cow or steer, also tasted by outsiders, was declared excellent; like the bear, this animal was as much a threat as a dish for the maroons. As a change from game meat there was the cultivated beef of the plantations of which so much has been recorded for maroon history, and the pork of domesticated pigs. Pies were as difficult as cattle for planters to keep around the Dismal Swamp.<sup>30</sup> For vegetables maroons could and surely did keep small kitchen gardens on the elevated drier land of their settlements. An ever-present flower the lupine contained grains which made a palatable cereal dish, even eaten dry.<sup>31</sup> From the seeds of a type of Dismal Swamp reed was made a bread which an outsider declared to be a fair substitute for wheat.<sup>32</sup>

The only description of a Dismal Swamp maroon community is one in the deeper Swamp. The dry land on which it was built rose gently from the surrounding swamp. The houses were not scattered but close enough to constitute a village. They were built of logs and stood on sturdy stilts, to discourage insect or animal invaders of the home, or modeled on the stilt villages of West African wet neighborhoods. Perhaps even the 'islands' of the Dismal Swamp became swampy after heavy rains. The doors of the houses had fasteners which secured the homes at night.<sup>33</sup>

The houses were furnished with benches and chairs hewn from logs and effectively carpentered. Beds were in the form of wooden shelves, piled high with blankets (of furs or skins?) stuffed with moss and sewed up. The interior of the homes centered around a hearth. By each hearth stood a broom made of sedge which was frequently used to sweep out the house. The houses were notably clean, cleaner it seems than the standard of rural regions at that time.<sup>34</sup>

According to this description of the village the maroons built roads in the deepest parts of the Swamp, ~~near their settlements~~, but of course not running far towards the dangerous outer parts of the Swamp. The approach to the neighborhood of the village was by a faint trail virtually impossible to follow without guidance, but as such trails converged closer to the village there was a well kept up dirt road, with trees carefully blazed and logs, worked into shape by axe, laid side by side over the frequent wet portions. Early in the twentieth century log bridges and canals as well as roads, of "unknown" origin, were discovered in the Swamp.

The people of this remote village showed no sign of the outside world in their clothing, which was made of skins sewn into breeches and dresses.<sup>35</sup> Other maroons of the Dismal Swamp however wore clothing of European cut apparently of outside origin, or a mixture of home-made clothes and items taken on raids beyond the Swamp.

In the military reports there is frequent mention of spears and swords or knives made by the metal workers of the guerrillas and used to obtain guns when the latter were lacking. They were of use in hunting as well. Safe and accurate guns were beyond the workshop equipment and supplies, if not the skills, of the maroon blacksmiths. The maroons also manufactured bows and arrows, mainly for the hunt, to preserve powder and shot for war, but when necessary as military arms for auxiliaries not better armed. For hunting the maroons also constructed traps made of logs, and deadfalls (constructions rigged to drop heavy weights that kill or maim).<sup>36</sup>

The most striking maroon artifact observed and reported was a type of body armor, a coat thickly wadded with turkey feathers which was impervious to small shot. Lead pellets, intended to lodge near the surface of the skin, became lodged instead in this thick matting. The armor was strictly defensive, useless in raids. But when slave-hunters were active along the edges of the Swamp their aim was to stop and disable, not to kill or maim valuable property, and against this the armor was excellent defense.<sup>37</sup> Padded armor was also common in West Africa, worn by the royal armies, tailored from thick woven mats, intended particularly as a protection against arrows.

The maroons did not need much cash but they required some, largely for the purchase of powder and shot, also probably for metal tools.<sup>38</sup> Two principal sources for cash existed. One was loot. Money was sometimes obtained, from persons waylaid on the road or from plantations raided. More often it was cattle and horses and other easily portable and salable goods. These were taken to the illegal and clandestine "negro traders," small store keepers, many of them 'free' Black persons, who abounded around the Swamp; from them the maroons could also purchase supplies.<sup>39</sup>

The other source of maroon cash was the shingle industry located along the Dismal Swamp Canal. Before the American Revolution there had also been an extensive industry of "timber pirates" on the northern edge of the Swamp, for the Norfolk ship yards. The marketable trees were "King's property," under British imperial mercantile regulations forbidden to the Colonists for cutting.<sup>40</sup> Under these circumstances it is likely that the Dismal Swamp timber pirates did not inquire too closely into the status of their occasional labor. Considering the later shingle



industry, maroons may have found a source for cash in those illegal lumbering operations.

One of George Washington's real estate enterprises was the Dismal Swamp Land Company, which he founded in 1763. It found itself land poor: it was too early in the history of advertising for underwater retirement developments, and there were undesirable neighbors deeper in the Swamp. So in the 1780's the Company turned to the manufacture of shingles.<sup>41</sup> The workers were called shingle gitters, not merely a dialect form, but an established trade term used by those who spoke standard English: one of the managers wrote of the danger of competitors' taking away his labor, "... they will get all the good shingle gitters from us." The use of this term shingle gitter instead of the more natural terms shingle maker or shingle cutter suggests that the worker rather than cutting his shingles in the yard and under the eyes of the Company went elsewhere and 'got' them. This is exactly so. The workers on the payroll went off into the Swamp and returned with shingles, most of which they had not made themselves but had gotten from other persons.

The historian of the Dismal Swamp Land Company, from his analysis of the quite complete financial books of the Company extant, discovered an intriguing fact. The number of shingles produced exceeded many times the number of workers on the payroll multiplied by the maximum productivity of a worker.<sup>42</sup> The question of where the excess shingles were gotten remains a mystery in this study of the voluminous records of the Company covering some eighty years. There is no hint of the existence of the Dismal Swamp people from whom most of the shingles were gotten, the maroons.<sup>43</sup>

The use of the labor of the outlaw people was a crime, the failure to report fugitives, and perhaps the aiding and abetting of their livelihood. And so the Company in its records maintained a crashing silence concerning their presence in the Swamp. The solution of the mystery of the multiplying shingles is found in oral information about the maroons written down by outsiders interested in the Swamp.

After the American Revolution the clandestine work teams of the timber pirates ceased with the end of British prohibition; the lumber industry became legal with no impelling reason to seek questionable labor. Moreover after the building of the Dismal Swamp Canal and the location of the Land Company's shingle camps along that waterway, it was more secure for maroons who ventured near the Swamp's edge to do so along the interior Canal than at the edge on the outskirts of the City of Norfolk. Also favorable to maroon security were the decentralized work locations of the shingle workers. To chop and shape shingles by ax did not require a side-by-side work force so long as the

completed shingles were brought into the Company camps on the Canal. The shingle gitters on the payroll were free persons and hired-out slaves. Many or all of these brought in each day several times more shingles than one worker could produce, and received their pay, figured by the piece. It was an arrangement worked out between the gitters and the maroon cutters, with the connivance of the Company and the masters of the gitters, who were hired-out slaves. The gitter turned in his own work, and that of several maroons who had been laboring on their shingles out of sight. For his service as a front and his danger, the gitter kept a part of his payment for the maroons' labor, turning over the balance to the hidden workers.<sup>44</sup> Manager and foremen closed their eyes in accord with Company policy. The maroons were the best shingle cutters available,<sup>45</sup> what with the chronic shortage of legal labor, free workers not enthusiastic over living with the Dismal Swamp around them, and slave gitters all too likely to go home with their maroon cutters, permanently.

The maroon shingle camps, though close in a direct line to the outside, the Canal and the Company shingle camps, were nevertheless difficult to find even with good directions, and difficult to reach even for the camp's gitter. The camp sites were homes, at least temporarily, for maroons who clung to the outer section of the Swamp.<sup>46</sup> As for deep Swamp maroons who needed cash, we may be sure they made the long journey home after the few days or weeks it took to earn what they required.

Considering the lack of a commercial acquisitive or accumulative basis and drive within maroon economy, the strong communal sense arising from mutual defense needs, the collective work of the slave plantations, if not also survivals of communal economic values from West African and Native American culture, it should not be assumed that each maroon shingle cutter was working only for himself and his immediate family. Perhaps in some cases at least parties went forth from the deep Swamp villages to earn community money as shingle cutters, most of the cash needed after all for the community defense, powder and shot.

That the form of maroon economy was to a significant degree communal rather than individualistic is indicated by a social institution observed in the Dismal Swamp region in the 1880s, after the maroon community had dissolved itself and its members had moved out to the lands around. This institution, a collective labor system, is described by a sociologist as distinctive to this particular region, one not known in other parts of North Carolina and Virginia. This labor cooperative is similar to the barn-raising and quilting parties famous in the tradition of



western pioneers but is much more structured than the latter are reported to have been.

The people around the Dismal Swamp called their collective labor group "The Gang." As in the western parallel, members received no pay from the beneficiary of their labor except that in their turn they would become beneficiaries, and food and drink were lavishly and lovingly prepared for the workers by the host family: So much so that the expression arose, as thanks to any host, "I've had a hog-killing time." Around the Dismal Swamp a member's call to his labor Gang for help was an absolute right with the force of law. The strength of the custom was such that objections to being called to work were rare, and a member left out of the job was deeply hurt. The kinds of work which the Gang performed were strictly limited to four: the most common log rolling (actually log 'toting') and hog killing (including the preparation of meats), the others "house movings" and "brick settings." Beyond these four there was strenuous objection by a Gang to working for a member, unless he were ill. Women as well as men were members of the work Gang. The institution had faded away by the first World War.<sup>47</sup>

The work Gang of the Dismal Swamp region was practically identical in function, organization and the binding strength of its obligations to the *dokpwe* of Dahomey, the *combite* of Haiti, and other labor collectives of West Africa and Black communities of the Western Hemisphere.<sup>48</sup> That the Gang was an institution of the white as much as the Black community around the Dismal Swamp does not conflict with the possibility of African influence, in light of Black-white cultural interchange in the South, and particularly the Black and non-Black ethnic composition of the maroon community. Judging from The Gang of 1880 it is likely that the maroon community inside the Dismal Swamp before the Civil War maintained as one of its institutions a labor collective, of West African origin, reinforced by Native American and British peasant communal traditions and the special needs for mutual aid in the swamp environment.

For security, maroon settlements were scattered, not close together in urban-like clusters. If one were discovered, others need not be. The descriptions of maroon communities available show a very great variety of ways of living or customs. Probably no other location of the same size within the United States was so diverse in culture and society, not even in Pennsylvania. A similar degree of diversity would be found in the borderlands of Europe where villages of differing nationality are found together scattered in an irregular checkerboard.

In the exterior portions of the Swamp were the hidden shingle camps and similar small settlements of the maroons who were not

prepared for deep Swamp life or who maintained regular economic or social contacts with the outside world.

Scratch Hall was a very different sort of community. Though at the edge of the Swamp and a mixture of pine barrens with swamp, the terrain was almost as difficult of access as the Swamp proper; the chaotic alternation of wet and dry bewildered the outsider, and the dry lands were almost as wild and overgrown as the wet. The Scratch Hall people did not live in any hamlets however small; each family had its cabin removed from the others. Scratch Hall was a maze of paths, well known to its people but likely to cause a stranger to become completely lost. Then, when the outsider did find a path which led to a cabin, no matter how innocent of wrong intent he knew himself to be, he received no directions back to the outside road, food, shelter or conversation. The Scratch Hall folk did not need to use violence to discourage visitors; they were much feared by the people outside. A myth about them that circulated in the open lands referred to their ferocity: They are the One-Membered Men. Each one is missing an eye, an arm, a leg or an ear.<sup>49</sup> There was doubtlessly a grain of truth in this tale.

The scattering of Scratch Hall homes and its labyrinth of paths are reminiscent of the still independent maroon town of Accompong on the island of Jamaica. Here the homes are set back from the main path (now a dirt road), not facing the path but each house facing in its own direction. Each path to a house wends its own devious way, ending at the door in a quite different direction from that which a stranger on the main path might expect.<sup>50</sup> Thus in the old days a militia raid at night would likely begin in confusion and end too late to find any maroons at home. Similar needs produced a similar access design in the community planning of Scratch Hall.

Without a community center, building or other, assemblies of the Scratch Hall people to muster their war bands, consult on policy or for other purposes, must have met before the home of one of the community, or in some agreed-upon open space. The notorious unsociability of the Scratch Hall people was only directed against strangers. Among themselves they appear to have been as tightly-knit a clan as any human community can be.<sup>51</sup> All that is missing is knowledge of the institutional forms through which their intense association was maintained and celebrated.

It has been already noted that the name Scratch Hall can hardly have referred to any rich man's mansion that ever stood in that wilderness, the name having been already old and of unknown origin in 1728, the time of its first mention. Scratch as a slang term referring to the land or the people could mean either poverty (as in scratching out a livelihood)



or the Devil (as in Old Scratch). Since the people in question were known for their ferocity not their poverty, the latter interpretation is the more likely. A use of the word hall to mean anything other than a building or room is less common than the slang meanings of scratch. The obsolescent colloquial meaning of hall is an ongoing state or condition in which a person lives: 'This is Liberty Hall' is an announcement that anything goes. 'He keeps bachelor's hall' is a statement that the person is untidy.<sup>52</sup> Thus the name Scratch Hall may have been originally applied to say that the people of this locality maintained a devilish way of life. From what we know of the people they probably liked their reputation and adopted the name. If like other maroons of the Dismal Swamp the Scratch Hall people ever venerated a spiritual Being not known to most Christians outside, this could have added meaning to the name; members of one faith often consider the divine Powers of other faiths to be devils.

Another quite different type of maroon community was also located in the outer section of the Swamp, at the northern end (unless it moved out from the center after the Civil War; knowledge of it is twentieth century). The people here were of the same descent as other maroons, Native American, African and European, but this community unlike most maintained a cultural or traditional identification with Native Americans, who undoubtedly made up the original nucleus. They called themselves the Nansamond Indians, either for a seventeenth century Nation, or for the Virginia county in which their part of the Swamp is located. As maroons generally must have been, this community is said to have been a proud people, however poor, marginal and racially reviled in the early twentieth century. A leading family this century possessed a Bible in which the earliest family entry was dated 1635, twenty-eight years after the founding of Virginia. This is also the decade in which the large numbers of fugitives are likely to have escaped from the Jamestown plantations, and headed in the direction of the Dismal Swamp.

Into the twentieth century the Nansamonds continued to build and use the dug-out canoes famous on the Roanoke Sound 200 years before. They also preserved information on the techniques of wolf trapping and bear hunting, and held religious customs concerning the latter animal, carrying his foot for "good luck." According to the ethnological report, members of the settlement showed African as well as Native American ancestry, and some associated with the African American community outside the Swamp.

The Nansamonds developed self-navigation in mud into an art. It was based upon an analysis of two types of mud, the relatively firm, and the "floating." For the former, the skill was two-fold: to keep the

maroon  
swamp

weight moving from leg to leg, and, rather than placing the foot straight down, to flex the lower legs, carrying the body's weight upon the shins. On floating mud the Nansemonds traveled "turtle fashion," on their bellies, and maintained a constant speed. To pause would be to die, horribly. These arts were taught to the children of the settlement from an early age.<sup>53</sup> There is no reason to think that in the days of the maroons this ingeniously developed skill was restricted to the Nansemond settlement; it is probably one explanation of the mystery of maroon swamp travel.

Another variety of maroon community was that of the larger settlements in the central Swamp.<sup>54</sup> Though intended to be permanent they were sometimes abandoned, probably often for fear of discovery. If a rare outsider somehow got himself to the vicinity of a settlement, was seen, but then disappeared, the community would have little choice but to undertake the arduous work of relocating their permanent village, even though it was more likely that the outsider perished on his way to the exterior than survived to report the location of the settlement. One such long abandoned settlement was accidentally discovered by outsiders, its cabins fallen in from age and beginning to merge with the natural debris as the wilderness reclaimed the cleared land. It had once been a permanent community, and one of long duration. For readily identified was the abandoned graveyard of the settlement.<sup>55</sup> After the Civil War there were reports of hunters stumbling upon similar abandoned villages.<sup>56</sup> It is the assumption of this study that the maroons left the Dismal Swamp and abandoned their settlements after Emancipation; by the time it was clear that there would be no real freedom for African Americans towards the end of the century the former maroons had grown too old to begin life anew in the Swamp and their children had grown up outside. There are no indications whatsoever of hidden communities in the Dismal Swamp during the last one hundred years.

What appears to have been one of the much older abandoned settlements lay near the edge of the Swamp in the late nineteenth century but had probably been a much more secluded place before drainage canals began to diminish the size of the Swamp. This swampy field is, or was, called Black Mingo Pocosin (pocosin, a swampy area).<sup>57</sup> Mingo means an Iroquoian-speaking person<sup>58</sup> and the field is therefore named for such a people or for the maroon chief Captain Mingo, in either case a survival of Tuscarora influence. If there was a settlement here it was likely to have been a community of Black Mingo, that is, persons of predominantly African descent with a special Tuscarora cultural tradition. The field, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, was shunned from "fear" (or reverence?). There



was a path to the center of the underbrush, but with no house or cabins at the end, a path that went nowhere, yet was still used by some persons for some purpose, perhaps commemoration of what once flourished there.

Local legend recounted that on stormy nights, from an abandoned house on the edge of Black Mingo Pocosin, voices may be heard engaged in an eternal dialogue, "Aunt Fereby, she won't drink it!" followed, by a female voice, "I'll make her!"<sup>59</sup> In the dialogue Aunt Ferebee (to use the standard spelling) appears to be the second speaker, and the subject would seem to be either forced poisoning or reluctant participation in a ritual.

This legendary association of the names Ferebee and Mingo calls to mind that Captain Mingo, probably a paramount chief, and Bob Ferebee, one of the great maroon paramount chiefs, were contemporaries, in the 1810s and 1820s.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this Black Mingo Pocosin with a Ferebee presence was the maroon capital during that period, one of the most active in maroon history. Of Aunt Ferebee all that can be said is that she deeply impressed herself upon the spiritual lore of the maroons and to her enemies was an ominous figure, as Priestess or Poisoner.

Another settlement of the interior Swamp can be roughly dated as to duration, from 1677 to 1855, almost two hundred years. It was Culpeper Island, large in area, 300 acres, and sizeable in population. The population was white as well as Black, and active guerrillas. Many of the civilians were slaughtered at this settlement by the Confederate "home guard" vigilantes at the very end of the Civil War.<sup>61</sup> The name of the Island takes the settlement back to the seventeenth century.

The Dismal Swamp family, the Culpepers of Culpeper Island, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, claimed descent from Governor Culpeper, of Virginia.<sup>62</sup> But Thomas Culpeper was only in America for three years, his real estate interests were in the north of Virginia, and Culpeper Island is not in Virginia but in North Carolina. It is understandable that the Dismal Swamp Culpepers, with a family tradition of being descended from 'Governor Culpeper's boys,' after over two hundred years would take Governor Culpeper to mean the famous Virginia Governor. Or the Culpepers may have still known otherwise, but in referring to "Governor Culpeper" may have been understood by an outsider to mean Thomas. For it is more likely that the Culpeper from whom the Dismal Swamp Culpepers were descended politically if not genetically was John Culpeper, the charismatic revolutionary of Durant's Uprising, whom tradition sometimes elevated to Governor during that insurrection.<sup>63</sup>

Like the Nansamond settlement, the Dismal Swamp Culpepers of Culpeper Island claimed a special relationship to the bears of the Swamp. These were numerous and for the earlier periods at least were said to have been a breed particularly large and fierce. A latter-day Dismal Swamp guide, Uncle Johnny Culpeper, claimed to speak "bear latin" with the beasts, and sometimes demonstrated, but refused to translate their replies. The observers from outside found this humorous and considered Uncle Johnny a character as they had "Uncle" Aklick.<sup>64</sup> From the context of maroon mixed culture however, talking with the bears suggests the great Bear Cult so widespread among Native Americans throughout North America. Certainly any tendency to believe that the Dismal Swamp bears were friends of the maroons must have increased an outsider's reluctance to test the claim by entering maroon country.

Since the common language of the maroons was English, their brief appearances to outsiders did not usually arouse comments on the difference of their culture from that of the majority outside. Their clothing was not often very different from that of other backwoods people. ~~They often bore a gun, another sign of acculturation to majority standards.~~ Opportunities for outsiders to observe maroons were of brief duration as well as infrequent. They were rarely seen except during raids, when captured, and in glimpses on the edge of the Swamp. The distinctive aspects of their culture, of African, Native American and British Peasant origin, and in response to Swamp conditions, were social institutions, customs and values requiring time and sensitivity to perceive, conditions not present in cursory observations.

Yet there were frequent rumors of another kind of deep Swamp maroon, "~~the wild men.~~" It was always unclear whether the rumor was fact or legend. By wild men, those who spoke of them seem to have meant exceptionally isolated maroons, and persons however briefly glimpsed who gave a striking impression of 'otherness'.<sup>65</sup> This probably meant less clothing, or fur or hide clothes. It may have meant whatever other impressions that could be received quickly, such as exotic weapons, ornaments, or markings on the skin.

It may have been to such "wild men" that a Black man of the region was referring in his answer to the question: How can you tell the difference between the shingle maroons and the maroons of the deep Swamp? The reply seems to shift between the "wild men" and the deep Swamp maroons in general.

How do they know them?

Oh, dey looks *strange*.

How do you mean?



Skeared like, you know, sir, and kind of strange, cause dey hasn't much to eat, and ain't decent, like we is.<sup>66</sup>

After Emancipation the rumored existence was verified of maroons, like the others organized in communities, but unlike others of a culture immediately observable as highly distinctive.

It was a Congo village, persons of West Bantu origin who had found one another in the Dismal Swamp, or persons of mixed African origins who had yielded cultural as well as political leadership to the Bantu element of the community, as the largest, earliest or most charismatic element of that particular settlement.<sup>67</sup>

This is the stilt village whose physical appearance has already been described as the only one available of a maroon village during its occupation.<sup>68</sup> Except possibly for the stilts, the physical description of this village may apply to maroon communities in general. A student of African material culture might have noticed distinctive Bantu qualities in the house construction and furnishings. But the actual observer could not escape the extreme 'otherness' of the Congo people.

To cure disease, the people engaged in ritual bathing, a custom widespread in West Africa.<sup>69</sup> The Queen of Congo Village was a leader in her own right, a constitutional characteristic of many other Bantu kingdoms. She was also the Soothsayer of the Village, who read the voices of the wild birds of the Swamp<sup>70</sup> (as Uncle Johnny Culpeper spoke with bears). X

The king was called King Jonah, probably a Bible-influenced version of a Bantu name. He was himself from the Congo region, possibly from a noble family, as basis for his selection as King by the maroons. The King was known throughout the Swamp by the other maroon communities as "Congo Jonah."<sup>71</sup>

When the King held court, those with business waited in the Village square. The royal procession approached from the palace, which was a short distance from the center of the Village. Men and women "chanted" as the procession drew near, with a musical scale or style unfamiliar to the outsider. The music was described as sad, wild, pulsating, rising and falling. When court was held at night men marched before the King, bearing torches. Then came the King, seated on a litter borne on the shoulders of four men.<sup>72</sup> Princess Anne

There was a Congo village. And there were individual maroons of other specific West African cultural or religious emphases: Osman (Islamic) and Gamby Gholar and his spiritual associates (Yoruba-Dahomean). This we know.<sup>73</sup> Did escaped slaves of the same African heritage, such as the Islamic, the Yoruba-Dahomean, and the Akan which made such an impress on Jamaica, find one another in the

Dismal Swamp in sufficient numbers and with the will to form their own villages, as did the Bantus? This we do not know. Since most escaped slaves who became maroons would have been born in America, like the rest of the African American people, it is probable that most Dismal Swamp villages which emphasized an African heritage united common elements from the various African nationalities, were, in fact, Pan-African.

None of this is to suggest that any maroon settlement could have been entirely of one culture in its original form, whether African, Native American or British peasant. The environment of the Swamp, and the threat of the slavery system, shaped maroon culture. Mutual isolation and common cause favored interchange among the old cultures. Cultural differences from village to village, though significant and striking, were not absolute but matters of emphasis. Scratch Hall with its indentured servant heritage, the Nansemond Indian Village, Black Mingo Pocosin with its Tuscarora associations, Culpeper Island which looked back to the seventeenth century Roanoke community, Congo Village, and other communities now unknown, were all African, Native American and British peasant in elements of culture and ancestry of members. In the Dismal Swamp maroon community the differences between settlements did not constitute an antagonistic diversity but the cultural pluralism of a people united militarily and therefore politically.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hubert J. Davis, *The Great Dismal Swamp* (Richmond: Cavalier Press, 1962), p. 14; F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 16, 46, 103-5, 181, 183; David Hunter Strother, "The Dismal Swamp," *Harper's Monthly* 13 (1856): 449. Johnson's work has been adjudged social history and invaluable folklore—Richard Walser, review, *North Carolina Historical Review* 43 (January 1966): 1.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 39; Strother, "Dismal Swamp," pp. 449-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 451.



<sup>4</sup> Alexander Crosby Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal* (n.p.: Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake, Va., 1967), p. 65; Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 159–60; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66; Edmund Ruffin, "Observations Made During an Excursion to the Dismal Swamp," *The Farmers' Register* 4 (1837): 518; Brown, *Great Dismal Swamp Canal*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>6</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 448; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Arnold, *The Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond* (Norfolk, Va.: n.p., 1888), pp. 21, 29; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 52. The burden of the poem is one of those "Indian tales" of love frustrated and the death of lovers which Mark Twain found so obnoxious and claimed were attached to local nature spots across the country.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Ruffin, "Proposal to Drain the Dismal Swamp," introductory note to William Byrd, *Description of the Dismal Swamp and a Proposal to Drain the Swamp* (Metuchen, N.J.: Charles F. Heartman, Historical series no. 38, 1922), n.p.; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 450.

<sup>10</sup> Berry Greenwood Benson, "Reminiscences . . .," 2 vols., typed manuscript, Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library, pp. 70, 72; Ruffin, "Excursion to the Dismal Swamp," p. 515; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 29; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 14, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 89; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> William Byrd, *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> David Leroy Corbett, *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663–1943* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), pp. 83–84.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 77–78.

<sup>15</sup> Corbett, *Formation of Counties*, pp. 106–7, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 184.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 9, note 48.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Frederick Stansbury, *The Lake of the Great Dismal* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> John Hamilton Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines* (New York: Easton and Mains, 1906), prologue (n.p.).

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 146; Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853-1854*, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), vol. 1, p. 177; Frederick Street, "in the Dismal Swamp," *Leslie's Magazine* (10-3): 530; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 57; Howard, *Shadow in the Pines*, prologue.

<sup>23</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 451; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 54; Olmstead, *Journey*, vol. 1, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 8, notes 18-19, and Chapter 10, notes 49-52.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 85, 89, 160; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Eaton, "Real Dismal Swamp," *Harper's* (1910): 24.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>29</sup> Byrd, *Description of Dismal Swamp*, p. 19; Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1959) vol. 2, p. 182.

<sup>30</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 448; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 187; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 29-30; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 141-45.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 13, note 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ruffin, "Excursion to the Dismal Swamp," p. 519.

<sup>33</sup> Albert R. Ledoux, *Princess Anne: A Story of the Dismal Swamp and Other Sketches* (New York: The Looker-On Publishing Co., 1896), pp. 41-42, 49. See footnote 67 below for discussion of the validity of this source.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 51.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42; Frank G. Speck, *Chapters on the Ethnology of the Powhatan Tribes of Virginia*, Heye Foundation Indian Notes and Monographs, vol. 1, no. 5 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1928), pp. 334-36.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 163.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold, *Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond*, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 451.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 89, 160.

<sup>40</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Robert H. Reid, "History of the Dismal Swamp Land Company of Virginia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1948), p. 25.



<sup>42</sup> Frederick Hall to Son, January 16, 1818, Dismal Swamp Land Company Papers, Manuscript Collection, Duke University Library; *Ibid.*, January 22, 1819. Frederick Hall was agent of the company.

<sup>43</sup> Reid, "Dismal Swamp Land Company," p. 88, 118. The finding in sources concerning the maroons of the answer to the question posed by this business historian is a small but pointed illustration of how the study of African American (and other ethnic) history may illuminate problems in what has been considered the main line of American history.

<sup>44</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 451; Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 57; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander Hunter, "Great Dismal Swamp," *Outing* (1895): 71.

<sup>46</sup> Strother, "Dismal Swamp," p. 452.

<sup>47</sup> Warren Scott Boyce, *Economic and Social History of Chowan County, North Carolina, 1880-1915* (New York, Columbia University, 1917), pp. 180-183.

<sup>48</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), pp. 161-65; Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 116-20; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 315-24.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 105, 118.

<sup>50</sup> Author's visit.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 101, 105.

<sup>52</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Davis, "'Great Dismal' Pictures," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 33 (1934): 183; Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 1, p. 40; Speck, *Ethnology*, pp. 267, 280, 285, 221-32, 336-37.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 163.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Street, "In the Dismal Swamp," p. 530.

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 223. The name was heard and transcribed as Black Mingle Swamp. But in English, concluding unaccented syllables of the sounds -el or -ul and -o are virtually indistinguishable to the ear. This will be demonstrated if the reader will pronounce, aloud such pairs of sounds as leo and leel, cleo and cleel, sprinkle and sprinko. Black Mingle has no meaning, whereas Black Mingo is a phrase encountered in early eighteenth century usage to distinguish those "Indians" from Red Mingoes.

<sup>58</sup> Frederic Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, 2 parts, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology

Bulletins, no. 30 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), part 1, pp. 867-68.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 223.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 9, notes 34-43.

<sup>61</sup> Howard, *Shadow of the Pines*, Prologue, pp. 17, 74. Also, see Chapter 12, note 9.

<sup>62</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 106.

<sup>63</sup> See Chapter 9, notes 34-43.

<sup>64</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 106.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 146, 163.

<sup>66</sup> Not decently clothed. Olmstead, *Journey*, vol. 1; p. 179.

<sup>67</sup> Ledoux, *Princess Anne*, pp. vi, 39. The other sketches are presented as fiction, but the author states that the title story, which is the source of information on Congo Village, is entirely true, though written in fictional narrative style. A young lady of a Princess Anne County planter family is abducted by the Bantu maroons who seek aid for sickness that has fallen upon them, and is safely returned home. The author states that any reader who doubts the factual nature of his report of Congo Village may consult *The World*, March 1889, p. 16. The New York City periodical source is concerned only with the community's disease, called leprousy. That the details relevant to this study are from another authentic source is suggested by the strong support rendered in Speck's *Ethnology* (see note 35 above), researched independently thirty years later.

<sup>68</sup> See notes 33-35 above.

<sup>69</sup> Ledoux, *Princess Anne*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 65.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 9, notes 61-65, and Chapter 14, notes 2-18.



## Chapter 11

### The Buffaloes: Maroon Mobilization and the Yankee Alliance, 1862-1863

The guerrilla raids from the Dismal Swamp of the 1850s merged into those of the 1860s.<sup>1</sup> But during the first year of the American Civil War there was no alliance between the maroons and the United States, for the latter had given no signs of moving towards an anti-slavery position, such as the military policy adopted by Lord Dunmore in 1775. On the contrary, the U.S. government under President Lincoln repeatedly made it clear in words and many kinds of action that the country's war aim was the preservation of the Union, not the abolition of slavery.

It was in the Spring or Summer of 1862 that the military alliance began between the Dismal Swamp maroons and the United States. Now there were signs of change in U.S. policy. Many thousands of slaves had escaped to U.S. Army lines and the practice of returning them to the slaveholders had ceased upon consideration that this strengthened the Confederate enemy. Northern men of military age were discussing why escaped slaves who wished to fight the enemy as U.S. soldiers should not be allowed to. U.S. Army officers in the occupied Sea Islands of South Carolina, the New Orleans neighborhood of Louisiana and in Kansas were conniving with Black warriors in their battles against Confederate slaveholders, though these military organizations were not yet officially recognized as regiments by the U.S. Army or government. The danger of European aid to the Confederate States was seen as increased by the U.S. lack of any high human principle as war aim. Public opinion and politics in the North were changing, towards the support of abolition as a means of winning the war. And all this was much publicized. In a few months Lincoln would decide to issue an

Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure, and to allow the legal mustering of Black regiments.

At the same time that these changes were becoming visible, units of the United States Army occupied the City of Norfolk in Virginia and the Island of Roanoke in North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> These points, controlling the entrances to Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound, were taken as part of the U.S. effort to establish a naval blockade of the Confederacy. But they were also at the northern and southern ends of the Dismal Swamp region. Thus it was that guerrilla bands based in the Dismal Swamp, augmented by escaping slaves and poor whites of the surrounding plantation country, began to fight the slaveholders more intensively and as allies of the United States. The role of the U.S. Army in the Civil War in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia would be to furnish military aid to the African American and poor white people of the region and to conduct one brief but ferocious raid later in the War in support of these allies. But the Army had no intention of occupying or pacifying the country, in accord with the Union strategy of a land war on two fronts only, the Mississippi Valley and Northern Virginia. The disruption of enemy power in the countryside as security for the bases at Norfolk and Roanoke Island and the U.S. was left to the maroons and new formed guerrilla bands of the Dismal Swamp. In the three years of the war against slavery the independent Black and poor white guerrilla army would succeed not only in serious disruption of the enemy's power but also in control of this part of the South.

The parallel with the British-maroon alliance, except for the greater scope of the later war, is astonishing. In both cases the alliance was founded upon a military emancipation policy, the presence of the larger allied power in the region was a part of naval operations, and the success of the land war was the work of the maroons and other Black and poor white forces. It is unlikely that any expert of the U.S. War Office during the Civil War knew or cared about the strategy initiated by Lord Dunmore. It is likely the old alliance was remembered in maroon tradition and the parallel therefore seen. It is certain the slaveholders remembered and associated, for they called the guerrillas of 1863 Tories.<sup>3</sup> The cause of the parallels between the two alliances is that the same people were engaged in the same war with the same enemy ninety years later.

The U.S. forces at Roanoke Island announced their presence to enemy and potential allies by shelling the Albemarle Sound shore of Pasquotank County. African Americans and poor whites acted immediately, and in large numbers.<sup>4</sup> Maroon war bands mobilized; recruits from slave quarters and poor white shanty towns who chose the guerrilla way in preference to the Regular Army joined them;



newcomers formed new bands; the Great Swamp as sanctuary still had room for all.

Other African Americans and poor whites, also in large numbers, flocked to the U.S. Army bases at Norfolk and Roanoke Island. At the latter place a Black company of fifty men was immediately organized. It was the nucleus of what was to become three Black Regiments of the Union Army from the State of North Carolina. By the Summer enough companies of escaped slaves and poor whites had gathered at Roanoke Island and been trained in conventional warfare to be named, organized and sent into action as the First North Carolina Colored Volunteer Regiment, U.S.A.<sup>5</sup> But the Emancipation Proclamation and the official U.S. recognition of Black regiments were not to be decreed for another six months, and so it was that after a year of fighting by this regiment, most of it under that name, in April 1863 the United States authorized formation of Black regiments in North Carolina!<sup>6</sup> It was about time, seeing that they were needed elsewhere in the War and that their brothers who had chosen to fight as guerrillas were doing well at home. For in August 1863 they were ordered to the deep South. Based on the Sea Islands of South Carolina the First and Second North Carolina Volunteers were joined to the 55th Massachusetts Colored Volunteer Regiment, forming the African Brigade, which took part in the long, arduous siege work and attacks on the swampy islands around Charleston, South Carolina, seeking to capture that important Confederate city, and fought in the river and coastal campaigns in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida which destroyed Confederate equipment and freed African Americans of those States.<sup>7</sup> This was a kind of warfare, partaking both of conventional and guerrilla techniques, to which soldiers of the North Carolina regiments with Dismal Swamp background brought special skills. In February 1864 the First North Carolina Volunteers fought their greatest battle, one of the worst Union defeats of the Civil War, the Battle of Olustee deep in the Florida interior fifty miles west of Jacksonville. If that town fell, the only urban center of the region, the Black people of East Florida would be free and that section of Florida lost to the Confederacy. The Union forces consisted of three Black and five Northern white regiments. The North Carolina Regiment was now brigaded with the 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment, Frederick Douglass's regiment which had won fame at the Storming of Fort Wagner. The Brigade was commanded by Colonel James Montgomery the Jayhawker, who had fought against slavery along with John Brown in the Kansas Civil War before the U.S. Civil War. At Olustee the Union casualties were terrible. The North Carolina Regiment lost 230 men, killed, wounded and 'missing.' The only fault officers found with the Black troops was

7 eager freedom

that when others facing impossible odds would have retreated without orders, they stood their ground and died.<sup>8</sup> The Union commander reported:

The colored troops behaved creditably — the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts and First North Carolina like veterans. It was not in their conduct that can be found the chief cause of failure, but in the unanticipated yielding of a white regiment from which there was every reason to expect noble service, and at a moment when everything depended on its firmness.<sup>9</sup>

When the U.S. established bases at the ends of the Dismal Swamp in the Spring of 1862, besides the many Black and poor white people who came to be Regulars in the Army, there were others who paid brief visits to U.S. Army headquarters. These were representatives of the many other Black and poor white persons who had decided to continue or begin fighting as guerrillas inside the Confederacy.<sup>10</sup>

So far as the United States was concerned, there were two types of guerrilla band in their official relationship to the Army. There were detached companies of the North Carolina Colored Regiment, and there were independent bands. The independent bands were in no sense part of the U.S. Army, they did not wear its uniform, their only relation to the Army was receipt of material aid and sometimes informal coordination of actions. The guerrilla bands which were listed as detached companies of the North Carolina Colored Regiment were supposed to keep in touch with Army headquarters and to wear the uniform, but their operations within Confederate territory away from the two U.S. bases on the coast made them also virtually independent in their plans and operations. There were doubts in all quarters whether they should be considered 'real' soldiers of the U.S. Army. The Confederacy and the regional slaveholder interest did not distinguish them from the independent guerrilla bands, and called and treated them as bandits and slave rebels. Regular officers of the U.S. Forces who were forced to encounter them, except perhaps their official liaisons, saw them as scum with whom they loathed to deal;<sup>11</sup> they could see that the war here was between outcasts and the best people, not the War they were fighting of Northern solid citizens against Southern gentlemen. After the War however the guerrillas of the detached companies were placed on the pension lists of the U.S.

It can be taken that most of those who joined the North Carolina Volunteers, learning conventional infantry warfare and fighting in the regular Regiments, were escaped slaves and poor whites of the



plantation country who had not been maroons. Generally it would have been of advantage neither to the U.S. Army nor to maroons to turn skilled guerrillas into infantrymen of the line. It is in the other types of military organizations, the detached companies and the independent bands, that maroons would fill the ranks, as well as such recently escaped slaves and poor whites of open plantation country who somehow, from individual backgrounds, knew the Swamp and ways of living off and traveling through the land. The indications that the anti-slavery guerrillas of northeast North Carolina and southeast Virginia during the Civil War were to a significant degree of old maroon community origin are the continuation of maroon guerrilla warfare up to the beginning of Civil War guerrilla warfare,<sup>12</sup> the regular reports of the Civil War guerrillas as being from the Swamp or having their rear bases in the Swamp,<sup>13</sup> and the high degree of skill in guerrilla warfare they showed from the beginning of their participation in the War.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that there were non-Black companies attached to the North Carolina Colored Regiments, tawny or yellow folk not called Negro,<sup>15</sup> is telling evidence that Black maroon communities and tawny communities of the Scratch Hall type (and their yellow poor white cousins of the open plantation country) had not been estranged by racial prejudices impinging from the Anglo-Saxon world, but considered themselves to be brother peoples, glad to be within the same regiments called by the somewhat general term "colored."

In these semi-independent and independent companies conducting their own campaigns during the War, there were many hundreds, probably several thousand fighters, though not all in the field at the same time. Some companies were Black, some tawny or white, some mixed. According to reports the Black warriors predominated,<sup>16</sup> but there were many others, perhaps almost as many as their darker comrades in arms.

During the Civil War the maroons of the Dismal Swamp and their newly recruited escaped slave and poor white fellows received a new name: The Buffaloes. One report states that the term was first applied by enemies derisively; if so, it was soon taken up proudly by the guerrillas. The origin of the name is evasive. It could be related to the special breed of dangerous wild cattle deep in the Swamp against which the maroons fought in the hunt and in self-protection. The Buffalo Soldiers were sometimes referred to as The Buffs, a designation that may have been reinforced by the names of famous old British regiments designated for the tan color of the trimming of their uniforms. As a source for the name Buffalo the British regiments are practically unthinkable. If the Buffaloes were first called Buffs, a likely explanation would be that it referred to the skin color of the Scratch Hall-type

contingents. The color buff is a tan or tawny yellow; buff leather is highly shined with oil. There are hints that the term was first applied to the tawny war bands, then extended to the Black. Buffalo also came to be extended from the guerrilla companies to the North Carolina Colored Volunteer Regiments as a whole.<sup>17</sup> It was probably after the transfer of the regular units of these regiments to the deep South, where they joined many other regiments Black and white, that Black troops in general began to be called The Buffalo Soldiers. The first reported use in this most general sense was in the Far West in the late 1870s or 1880s. There legend avowed that the Black Regiments were called Buffalo Soldiers by the Native American Nations because the spiral coiled hair of African Americans reminded them of the buffalo.

During the guerrilla war around the Dismal Swamp it could not have hurt Buffalo morale to hear another legendary attempt to explain their name: They were called this because they were as hard to cope with as buffaloes.

As with Lord Dunmore during the American Revolution, the guerrillas of the Dismal Swamp made it possible for their ally the U.S. Army to remain at Norfolk and Roanoke Island by provisioning them with corn and cattle brought back from plantation raids.<sup>18</sup> Also during the first several months of the U.S. occupation of the bases, fifty highly skilled scouts, guides and spies presented themselves and were actively engaged. Their U.S. liaison reported that they were "invaluable and almost indispensable." They were constantly on expeditions of thirty to three hundred miles through Confederate territory, subject to death if captured. Often they were discovered and pursued, at times by bloodhounds; sometimes they were captured and killed, or their fate remained unknown but easy to surmise.<sup>19</sup>

Volunteer Swamp Scout Sam Williams conceived a plan whereby several hundred Confederate regulars might be captured, which at that stage of the War would be a major Union victory. On the staff map at Roanoke headquarters he pointed out the location of the enemy, described the character of the country, marked the secret paths through the Swamp. The commanding General ordered the operation. The Scout, with twenty cavalymen, led three regiments into the Swamp. After a harrowing 'march,' but nearly to the point where the enemy would be cut off and forced to surrender, the Yankee in command refused to believe any longer that there was a path ahead where their guide pointed, and ordered the brigade in a different direction. The Confederate regiment was alerted, the Union advance guard was attacked, and though the Union regiments rescued the cavalry, Scout Williams was forced to escape into the underbrush where he was pursued for a day before he eluded the enemy and returned to headquarters. The Colonel who had



commanded confessed that it would have been a great victory if he had taken the path shown by the Scout, and the Confederates emphatically averred that the Black man's plan would have secured their capture. Sam Williams received high commendations from the regimental officers at Roanoke Island.<sup>20</sup>

Another Scout, while escaping through the Swamp from a Confederate camp where he was held, discovered hidden in the Swamp cotton bales lashed together and piled high as a house, secreted among trees thick with foliage and carefully covered with brush. At Roanoke headquarters he told the commanding officer, "If you can give me a flat boat and some men, we can get that cotton." After secession, cotton was naturally lacking to the Northern States, but badly needed for the construction of protective padding for gunboats. The Commander at Roanoke was by now accustomed to heeding the suggestions of the Swamp men. With twenty other African Americans and a hundred Army regulars this Scout set out with his requisitioned boat. Three days later they steered triumphantly back, the deck piled to capacity with bales of cotton to an amount worth \$26,000 in the money of that time, many times more in today's currency. Now the gunboats of the Union would be more secure in their campaigns along the coasts and rivers of the South.<sup>21</sup>

In Camden County, North Carolina, the Buffalo Chief was Captain Peter T. Burgess. His distinction was that he, and some who became Buffaloes with him, were of one of those very old families or clans of the region whose members were found both in the Anglo-Saxon and the outcast societies, like the Ferebees, and the Durants and Oggs of old Roanoke. Buffalo Captain Burgess was the descendant of William Burgess, first minister of Shiloh Baptist Church, mother church of North Carolina, founded by the abolitionist Paul Palmer in the early eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

There is no mention of Burgesses' entering the Swamp before the Civil War or clear indication of any becoming members of the outcast poor white society, but the family did sharply divide into two branches, one successful members of the planter elite, the other poor, in the economic if not the Poor-White social sense. If the latter were not 'Poor Whites' they had social contacts with that caste, and held values not a part of Anglo-Saxon planter culture.

Two of William Burgess' sons became Baptist ministers; then, around the middle of the eighteenth century occurred the branching of the clan. In the elite branch of the family, there were two American officers of the American Revolution, and later one of the wealthiest slaveholders of the region and a United States Congressman, Dempsey Burgess. The division in the family was symbolically represented by

the elite branch becoming Episcopalian, while the poor branch remained in the faith of their fathers, Baptist.<sup>23</sup>

Peter, who became the Buffalo leader, was of the poor Burgesses. He and other poor Burgesses were still members or associates of Shiloh Baptist Church, though by the time of the Civil War the majority of families of that Church, probably middle class or small planters, were socially above the remaining Baptist Burgesses. Perhaps at the defection of the elite Burgesses to the Episcopal Church the poor remnant had become an embarrassment to the Baptist Church, tolerated in deference to the memory of the Church's founder William Burgess.

As a boy before the Civil War Peter Burgess was already enthralled with things military, joined the militia, and rose to the rank of First Lieutenant of one of the Camden County companies,<sup>24</sup> with the help of other poor Burgess militiamen. (Militia officers were elected.)

When the War came, the militia took on new importance and the holding of militia commissions below the ranks of Colonel and Major obtained a prestige they had not previously possessed. A vacancy occurred in the command of the Second Camden Company to which Peter Burgess belonged, and he naturally assumed that he would become Captain through seniority and election. It was not to be. A higher officer, of the planter class, announced a hitherto unheard of educational test for company command. Illiterate Peter could not pass the test, and the command went to a young relative of the planter and high militia officer who had ordered the test.

Whereupon Peter and the other poor Burgesses of the Camden militia resolved to leave that organization and to offer their services to the Union cause. There was very likely more to their decision than mere pique at a personal intrigue and affront, and loyalty to a kinsman, considering that these Burgesses were willing to become members or affiliates of a regiment officially called "Colored," and to join a guerrilla army most of whose members were Black and tan. This poor branch of the Burgesses was marginal, between normative Anglo-Saxon society and the poor white caste, if it was not fully a part of that caste in all things save their descent from William Burgess and consequent association with the Baptist Church and militia. It is quite possible that Peter and his close kin when they joined the Carolina Militia before the War would not have welcomed the prospect of lynching poor white 'bandit' leaders without a trial and the massacre of poor white civilian communities, which were to become part of the regional militia's duty.

It is also only fair to the planter who devised the educational test and his relative who passed it to point out that their scheme may have been more than a blatant piece of personal intrigue. The new procedure may have also been a regional Confederate security measure to weed out



marginal social elements from positions of sensitivity. It would seem to have been advantageous to the Confederacy and the slaveholders of the region to help the ilk of the poor Burgesses on to their joining the Union cause, considering their alacrity in becoming Buffaloes, rather than to let them remain nestled like vipers in the bosom of Anglo-Saxon society, persons whose loyalty to the planter class and the institution of slavery was doubtful.

From Roanoke Island there returned to Camden County Lieutenant Peter T. Burgess, U.S.A., holding his commission in the First North Carolina Colored Volunteer Regiment. Some of the other poor Burgesses joined already existing guerrilla units attached to this Regiment, others recruited members to join them in a new independent guerrilla band, numbering fifty. During the War Captain Burgess (called for his command rather than his commission) was considered chief of all guerrilla bands in the Camden sector, and he and his close kinsmen, together with other poor whites, fought shoulder to shoulder with the Black and tawny guerrillas who made up the majority of the Burgess Command.<sup>25</sup>

At the time of the introduction of the educational qualification for militia command, the Baptists of the region decided that now was the time to clear out questionable elements from their membership. At a regional convention of 1863 this query was directed to the Baptist Association:

Should a church hold in fellowship a member who has encouraged, sympathized with or given aid and comfort to the enemy, whether that enemy be the regular forces of the United States, or that infamous band of unprincipled persons known as buffaloes?

The next words in the record book are, "Answered in the negative."<sup>26</sup>

The Buffalo Burgesses and any other Baptist Buffaloes did not agree. It was more their Church, their County and their country than theirs who claimed to rule these institutions. They gave their answer one day when the guerrillas of Camden County descended on the Village of Shiloh. While other Buffaloes went about their work of searching for Confederate soldiers, gathering portable contraband, burning other Confederate property, and freeing what slaves remained, the Burgesses entered their old meeting house and reverently lifted up and carried off the symbol of William Burgess, their own great-great-great grandfather and the father of the Baptist Church: the great, leather-bound pulpit Bible of Shiloh Baptist Church. The Roanoke abolitionist heritage of

the Palmers and Cush Quashey had endured a century and a half.<sup>27</sup> The Commander-in-Chief of the Buffalo guerrilla companies, of North Carolina and Virginia, and therefore paramount chief of the maroons of the Dismal Swamp, was Captain Jack Ferelis: tall, handsome in his uniform of a Union Army officer, a fine-looking man.<sup>28</sup> They say he was a deserter from the Confederate Army,<sup>29</sup> which may be true; the Confederacy had launched a heavy draft from the beginning of the War and deserters by the thousands played an important part in the resistance to the Confederacy behind the lines throughout the South.

His subordinate Captain Burgess over in Camden County was of ambiguous or marginal social origin. There was nothing marginal about Jack Ferelis; he was maroon. From childhood he had been a member of that people, with values other than those of Anglo-Saxon society, a disturber of the plantation social order. He had plundered his enemy, and suffered penalty at the hands of their law. In his teens he had participated in maroon guerrilla raids upon the plantations, before the beginning of the Civil War between the United and Confederate States.<sup>30</sup> Totally without education, his intellect was of the highest caliber. His name was transcribed Fairless by later writers, a form more acceptable as a modern Anglo-Saxon American name, but in his time it was written Ferelis.<sup>31</sup> He was of the Scratch Hall or kindred heritage.

When the U.S. Army came, Jack Ferelis obtained a lieutenant's commission from Roanoke Island and back at his hiding place in the Swamp at Chowan County recruited (or regathered) his personal war band, some fifty to a hundred men from Perquimans and Chowan Counties. At the same time he established (or re-established) lines of communication and coordination with the bands of the other North Carolina counties and those of Virginia, detached companies of the Colored Volunteer Regiments as well as independent war bands. His personal command was attached to the First Carolina Colored Volunteers under the designation Company E.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from his general leadership, the great contribution of Captain Ferelis was the establishment of Fort Ferelis on the Chowan River, near the Dismal Swamp, seventeen miles up from Albemarle Sound.

Fort Ferelis had been Wingfield Plantation, the property of Dr. Richard Dillard, an outstanding planter of the region, until its seizure by the Buffaloes in the Summer of 1862, practically at the beginning of the alliance between the United States and the maroons and other guerrillas. The guerrillas held the Fort for two years, as long as they needed it, and during the first year it was unquestionably the center, the capital, of Buffalo power.<sup>33</sup>

The Chowan River was a strategically sound location for the guerrilla center. At the far, western end of Albemarle Sound from



Roanoke Island at the eastern outlet, the Fort was a third base of the anti-slavery alliance, together with Roanoke Island and Norfolk, transforming the Norfolk-Roanoke line into a Norfolk-Roanoke-Fort Ferelis triangle. The Chowan River, which flowed down from the northern edge of the Dismal Swamp, provided a route for guerrillas between Virginia and North Carolina. And the location at the western edge of the Dismal Swamp region was as convenient as it could be consistent with security for fugitives from the limitless plantation country of the Southland which stretched to the west.

The particular site on the Chowan River, Wingfield Plantation, was selected partly from revenge, as a political act. Dr. Dillard, one of the region's slaveholders most ardent for the Confederacy, had been Chowan County Delegate to the North Carolina Secession Convention. There were other more practical reasons or advantages for the site chosen. It was on a rather high, flat bank of the River, a very high bank for that swampy region, giving it control of the Chowan, removing that most important river of the region from the regular use of the Confederacy.<sup>34</sup> Seventeen miles up the River, it was one of the closest plantations to the Dismal Swamp, a convenience for Buffaloes whose families lived in old maroon communities inside the Swamp, and an added security for escaped slaves at the Fort in the event that the Fort fell and it became necessary to flee into hiding. The site was at the point where the River narrows, and the breadth of the River downstream to the Sound provided a good route for communications with Roanoke Island by gunboat. The height of the riverbank provided one natural wall for a fort, and the flatness (as well as dryness) of the land was ideal for encampments of escaped slaves. Finally, the selection of a well-known plantation conspicuous on the bank of the River offered escaping slaves a goal easier to find than some more obscure location.

This was the essential difference between Fort Ferelis and the Dismal Swamp communities of earlier maroon history. Now the sanctuary was on the exterior edge of the Swamp rather than the interior. Escaped slaves in the Swamp finding the maroons (or *vice versa*) before the fugitives perished must have always constituted a tragic problem since the first maroon communities were established. The change of location of sanctuary to the exterior of the Swamp was now made possible by the new factor of the Civil War. Otherwise the sanctuary and military purposes of Fort Ferelis were identical to those of the old maroon communities.

The rationale for the establishment and maintenance of Fort Ferelis, its historic meaning, was that there be one place both secure and easily accessible to which escaping slaves might flee and from which war parties might set off. These were the two closely related

functions of Fort Ferelis.<sup>35</sup> It was well that the open ground of the Fort measured fifty acres,<sup>36</sup> for the huts, tents and open air camps of the fugitives. For hundreds, sometimes thousands, were constantly assembling here. Some joined the guerrillas.<sup>37</sup> Most, well guarded on the way, went forth to join the regiments of Black regulars or the civilian freedmen's settlements sponsored by the U.S. Freedmen's Bureau and its predecessor agencies, far away and secure in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. or on the Sea Islands of South Carolina.

As a guerrilla base Fort Ferelis was a rallying point for new war bands forming, and for separated Buffaloes regathering. It was a place of retreat after campaign, for rest, recovery, restocking of supplies preparatory for new battles. War bands set off from the Fort on new campaigns weekly, some say daily and nightly.<sup>38</sup> As Buffalo companies farther east, such as Burgess's Band, fought their county battles, the guerrilla bands which flowed out from the gates of Fort Ferelis ranged through Chowan and Perquimans Counties, on through the border Counties of Bertie and Gates, and beyond the Dismal Swamp region into Hertford County.<sup>39</sup>

From Fort Ferelis permanent outposts were established to the west, in the midst of plantation country. In small wilderness spots too accessible to the enemy, they were posts of danger, posts of death for their personnel. Three were surprised and slain at the station called Buffalo Island. At China's Mash a posse of fifty ambushed the post and slew Jack Ferelis's deputy for the west, the aged Gilbert Holloman. Dying with him was his wife, Bun Eddie, and another Black woman.

They were avenged. Ceaselessly the Buffalo Soldiers raided plantations and villages and neighborhoods which supported the Confederacy, destroyed all buildings and such supplies and equipment of possible military or economic use to the enemy as could not be brought back as contraband of war, demoralized the Confederate citizenry, reduced Confederate influence or control, but above all, freed the enslaved.<sup>40</sup> Some fugitives found their way to Fort Ferelis, most were guided. It is said that sometimes hundreds of newly freed persons returned with the guerrillas from a single raid. It was the stated goal of the guerrilla army of the Buffaloes to clear the country of every slave.<sup>41</sup> All these mandates of the guerrilla companies on their raids were identical to those held by the Dismal Swamp maroon war bands during 150 years; they were mandates until then unheard of by the United States Army. Later in the Civil War the United States was to take up a strategy similar to that of the maroons, notably by General Sherman in his march across Georgia at the end of the War. Now in the second half of 1862 and in 1863 the old maroon program for slaveholders was executed by the Buffaloes more widely and thoroughly than ever before



in maroon history. The devastation, the bloodshed, the suffering of some relatively innocent and some damnably guilty and many in-between were horrifying. Here if anywhere in the South the vintage of wrath was trampled out. But across the wide savanna grounds of Fort Ferelis, in the night among the fires, there must have been wonderful and humane sights and sounds now unrecoverable: warriors; women, children and the aged; Black, tawny, white; Spirituals and ballads; hoedowns and jubas.

Although there were Buffaloes from the northern part of the Dismal Swamp and the adjoining counties of Virginia and some guerrilla operations in those counties,<sup>42</sup> the lack of reports of specific events suggests that there were no campaigns there comparable to the continuous and intense guerrilla warfare around the southern half of the Swamp. The geography of the war between the two regular armies provides an explanation. The principle battle front of the formal War throughout was that of northern Virginia, between the two capitals Richmond and Washington. These campaigns of movement and counter-movement within a single region and shifting lines of trench warfare around Richmond were not only to the north of the Confederate capital but also often to the east; across the peninsulas of coastal Virginia, and even farther down towards North Carolina east of Petersburg, Virginia. This eastern segment of the semicircle of Union attack and Confederate defense around Richmond was not far from the Virginia or northern region of the Dismal Swamp. If there had been extensive Buffalo raids into the plantation lands of Virginia they would have approached close to the lines, fortifications, military units and battles of the largest armies of the United States and the Confederacy, in the permanent and primary theater of the War. Guerrillas avoid confrontation with regular military units of their enemy; to approach entire enemy armies would be unthinkable. From the standpoint of the U.S. Army any significant activity of allied guerrillas near the main battle front would probably be considered a source of confusion rather than a help. So instead maroons and other African Americans and Poor Whites of the Virginia Dismal Swamp region made their contribution in other ways than guerrilla warfare in their own counties. Those who were already guerrillas or wished to join that form of struggle traveled down through the Dismal Swamp or along its edges and enlisted in the Buffalo companies in and around the southern part of the Swamp.<sup>43</sup> Most escaped slaves and other fugitives from southeastern Virginia, if raids from Fort Ferelis did not reach their neighborhoods, made for Norfolk for sanctuary and enlistment in regular regiments of the U.S. Army.<sup>44</sup>

During the Summer and early Fall of 1862 the Buffaloes of newly established Fort Ferelis left the physical arrangements of Wingfield Plantation unchanged. It was an armed camp depending for defense not on walls but on manpower alone: scouts, lookouts, pickets and garrison. But in November there were two hundred escaped slaves at the Fort, whom the Confederates were seeking, but the garrison was insufficient for the number of the enemy. It so happened that guerrillas absent from the Fort could be contacted and returned in time; the enemy was beaten off, with the help of a gunboat, which destroyed their boats and shelled them on the shore. But the close call brought home to the Buffaloes the need for a fort in the physical as well as the organizational sense.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that the recapture of escaped slaves would have been as heavy a blow to the Buffaloes as loss of the fort. For a group of fugitives to be seized from a place promised for sanctuary would not only have been a moral disaster but would also have destroyed the credibility of the Buffalo plan among the people of the plantations.

Captain Ferelis was able to secure the services of a professional draftsman with the U.S. forces at Roanoke Island to draw up plans for the fortifications. The engineering and construction were completely performed by the people themselves. The major responsibility fell upon African Americans, recent from slavery. Guerrillas could render token service, but their main work was elsewhere and continuous. Fugitive poor whites could join in the heavy unskilled labor, but as a group they lacked skills for the careful construction required in the defense of human lives and liberty. An ill-wrought fort would be worse than none for those in search of sanctuary. So the Black people took the lead: Those who were not carpenters; blacksmiths or members of the other skilled trades which were the specialty of the enslaved, exercised on the general jobs the coordination and precision characteristic of African American cooperative labor. The large and complex work was accomplished with alacrity and skill, according to the report of the son of the emigre owner of Wingfield.<sup>46</sup>

The Fort was built in the shape of a parallelogram. The Black and other laborers with their self-appointed foremen and craftsmen built breastworks two hundred yards long running back from the River. There the wall turned, and they built it another four hundred yards parallel to the River. At the end of this wall there had been a ravine, down which a little stream trickled to the River. Here the freedmen constructed a dam, which caused the ravine to fill to a depth of ten feet. Where the new river flowed into the Chowan they constructed a second dam, which increased the depth of the water to fifteen feet. Thus the fifty acre fort was surrounded on two sides by walls, and on two sides by rivers, one



man-made. At each end of the river front the people built blockhouses, to prevent possible entry along the river edge. At the weakest point of the fort, where the two walls met, they built an earthen mound seventy-five feet square and fifteen feet high. On top of this they constructed a heavy log building with flat roof. There were openings for rifles, and portholes from which cannons seized from the Confederates pointed from the tower east, north, west and south. Gates were installed on each wall, by the tower, for use in the event of a charge upon the enemy from the land sides. On the grounds another 150 yards of breastworks were built as defenses for repelling an enemy that might mount the outer walls. Except for the central building all plantation buildings and trees on the grounds were burned to increase the efficiency of maneuvering and other use of space.<sup>47</sup> The Dillard mansion was left, for the comfort of fugitives or guerrillas who had special need for shelter more than temporary camping on the grounds.

For the riverside defense of the Fort there was a U.S. gunboat stationed below the bank, except when it was patrolling the River or carrying a message between Fort Ferelis and Roanoke Island. Other than the gunboat's complement there was no one from the U.S. regulars among the officers of Fort Ferelis, and none is mentioned at any time as serving with any Buffalo company. The gunboat officers had as few contacts as possible with the Buffaloes: it is from them that we learn of the contempt felt by the officers and gentlemen of the U.S. forces.<sup>48</sup>

By the next Spring, in 1863, the loss of slaves and devastation of the countryside were such that the Confederates made desperate attempts to destroy Fort Ferelis. In March when the Fort's garrison was low, 150 Confederates surprised the Fort, but were driven back across the River. In April a sizable Confederate force again crossed the River.<sup>49</sup> A large number of fugitives occupied the Fort who would be valuable contraband to the Confederates both financially and politically, but they managed to escape into the swampy lowlands beyond the Fort.<sup>50</sup> Buffalo bands in the vicinity were driven off by the Confederate force, but twenty-three Buffaloes held out in the tower until the eventual return of the gunboat forced the Confederates to abandon the battle.<sup>51</sup> The Buffaloes never gave up the Fort until their use for it had passed.<sup>52</sup>

The end of Jack Ferelis is tragic: he was executed as a security risk to the Buffalo cause upon the consensus of his own men. The maroon commander's background was not such as to have been personally acquainted with the social graces and frequent charm of the plantation elite. Some of this element, acting secretly for the Confederacy, pretended to be neutral or out of the War, and insinuated themselves with the chief. They impressed him, he liked being around them, he accepted their pretended friendship. As a spokesman for the slaveholders

said, "Our people were learning to manage him." The Buffaloes noticed, and considering the details of his new relationships, which are now unknown, determined that their army was endangered by the indiscretion and new attitudes of their commander-in-chief. Again familial or 'clan' relationships enter into this history. The most intransigent among the Buffalo leadership at this time in their personal as well as social hatred of the members of the planter or Anglo-Saxon society was the Etheridge family. It was Wallace Etheridge who performed the execution of Jack Ferelis, by pistol. That his act was at the behest of the community is confirmed by the Buffaloes' selection of Joseph W. Etheridge as the new commander of Company E, First North Carolina Colored Volunteers.<sup>53</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Hamilton Howard, *In the Shadow of the Pines* (New York: Easton and Mains, 1906), pp. 17, 74; David Hunter Strother, "The Dismal Swamp," *Harper's Monthly* 13 (:1856): 57; F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Benbury Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales of North Carolina History* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1901), p. 234; Jesse Forbes Pugh, *Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N.C.: n.p., 1957), p. 160; John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 59; Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 216-17.

<sup>3</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 425n.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Colyer, Superintendent of the Poor under General Burnside, *Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army, in North Carolina, in the Spring of 1862, after the Battle of Newbern* (New York: n.p., 1864), pp. 6, 9. Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, pp. 234-35; Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Coyer, *Services Rendered*, p. 13; Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 59.



<sup>6</sup> Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), pp. 129-30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 267-69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>10</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup> Warren Scott Boyce, *Economic and Social History of Chowan County, North Carolina, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University, 1917), p. 244n; Richard Dillard, *The Civil War in Chowan County, North Carolina* (n.p.: n.p., 1916), pp. 15-16.

<sup>12</sup> See Note 1 above.

<sup>13</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 174; Samuel A'Court Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, 2 vols, 2 pts. each (Raleigh, N.C.: n.p., 1925), vol. 2; pt. 2, p. 895.

<sup>14</sup> See below, notes 19-20, 33-41, and Chapter 12, notes 18-22, 33-36.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 235, 239; Barrett, in *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 174, calls the regiments "Union Volunteers," not "Colored Volunteers."

<sup>16</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 235; Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, pp. 174, 220n.

<sup>17</sup> Ashe, *History of North Carolina*, vol. 2; part 2, p. 895; Thomas C. Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County and Edenton, North Carolina* (Edenton, N.C.: Chamber of Commerce, 1967), p. 75; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 239.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Colyer, *Services Rendered*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 162.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-63.

<sup>26</sup> James A. Delke, comp., *History of the North Carolina Chowan Baptist Association, 1805-1881* (Raleigh, N.C.: Chowan Baptist Association, 1882), p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 163. See also Chapter 5, note 9.

<sup>28</sup> J.H. Garrett, "A Historic Sketch of the County of Chowan," *The Albemarle Times*, n.d., clipping in North Carolina Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

<sup>29</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Boyce, *Economic and Social History*, p. 244n; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> Garrett, "Historic Sketch."

<sup>32</sup> Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, pp. 11, 15; Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, pp. 4, 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. The author of the essay was the son of this planter.

<sup>35</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75.

<sup>36</sup> Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 176.

<sup>38</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 235; Garrett, "Historic Sketch."

<sup>39</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 175.

<sup>40</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Legends and Myths of North Carolina's Roanoke-Chowan Area*, 2d ed. (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 103-7; Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 231, 236.

<sup>41</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75.

<sup>42</sup> Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, p. 11; Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 184.

<sup>43</sup> Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 184.

<sup>45</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75; Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 17.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16; Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76; Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>50</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 177.

<sup>51</sup> Parramore, *Cradle of the Colony*, pp. 75-76; Dillard, *Civil War in Chowan County*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Garrett, "Historic Sketch."



## Chapter 12

### On To Richmond: Victory, 1863–1868

As the United States could not deflect its army to subdue and control the countryside if it were to maintain its two-front strategy, so also the Confederacy could not spare units of its army from the major battle fronts. Its policy perforce was to leave the maintaining of slave system order in the countryside to local planter forces. This hope was frustrated for the Dismal Swamp region and beyond by the Buffaloes.

Without a Confederate Army, and unable to maintain the normal institutions for local control in the face of Buffalo fury, the planters of this region consolidated militia, police and patrol into an underground, a secret "home guard," sometimes called "the rangers." Members, and above all officers, did not admit their membership; uniforms were not worn; and there was no adherence to either the rules of war or the civil law.<sup>1</sup> They were guerrillas, as much as were the Buffaloes. Considering their purposes, they resembled vigilantes or the slightly later Ku Klux Klan as much as they did a militia. The Confederate Army, unlike that of the United States in respect to the Buffaloes, kept no records on this "home guard."<sup>2</sup> Only once did this "home guard" take on a unit of the regular U.S. Army,<sup>3</sup> but the war between the two guerrilla armies was unbridled, raid and counter-raid again and again. These Confederate "rangers" however did not like to engage in direct battle with Buffalo companies composed of African American soldiers,<sup>4</sup> which reluctance severely limited their opportunities for battle against armed and organized men. An exception appears to be the attacks on Fort Ferelis, unless the Confederacy, considering the importance of the Fort, nudged the "home guard" in these cases. Despite reluctance to face most of the Buffalo war bands in direct combat the "home guard" found ways to oppose them: raids upon their neighborhoods, assassination and massacre.

Assassination and counter-assassination in reprisal were the order of the day in late 1862 and in 1868, on the part of both sides we are told, and this seems reasonable. A few names of Buffalo chiefs killed by the Confederate guerrillas are recorded: Captain Bone Dowdy, one of the most hated of Captain Peter Burgess' command in Camden County, was killed.<sup>5</sup> Captain Tom Newby of Perquimans County was shot down. Some Buffaloes as honored guests attended a dance given by the African American community on the outskirts of Elizabeth City. Down the road from the party the planter underground set up an ambush and as the dance broke up gunned down Black Sanders, a Buffalo Captain. His brother White Sanders escaped and became the new commander of the "Sanders Federal Gang."<sup>6</sup>

At a time when Edenton was under the sway of the Buffaloes the "home guard" determined to attack the place, deal with those who sympathized or had fraternized with the Buffaloes, and burn the village down. The destruction of the historic old county seat and a possible massacre were averted by the field commander's last minute refusal to obey his orders.<sup>7</sup> At another time, when Edenton was under Confederate control, a Buffalo company raided the village. One Buffalo was killed during the unsuccessful attack, and a number captured. These were not held, sent out of the region as prisoners of war or tried as criminals, but lynched and buried in secret, "taken up to Pembroke where they still remain filling oblivious graves." The planter or other pro-Confederate leaders of the County after the Civil War and Reconstruction still did not doubt that this "tragedy" was justified by the "circumstances."<sup>8</sup>

Not all atrocities against civilians were averted as the burning of Edenton had been. Inside the Dismal Swamp one of the old Black and white (or tawny) maroon settlements on an area of elevated land was Culpeper Island. The planter vigilantes surprised this place and massacred its people, largely non-combatant, number unknown. At the very end of the war, when there could be no possible military meaning to the act, the Confederate vigilantes, still calling themselves a home guard, attacked Scratch Hall while its young men were away, and murdered twenty-two of the civilian folk who had no time to escape into neighborhood hiding places.<sup>9</sup>

The names of planter guerrilla leaders assassinated by the Buffaloes are not reported, which may be explained by the pro-Confederate reports wishing to stress the losses of the enemy, not their own. Or it may indicate that the Buffaloes, who did not mind risking face to face battle as much as their enemy did, allocated so much of their effort to destroying property and freeing slaves that they had less time than the planters for planning and executing ambushes against individual enemy leaders. What with the reports of three massacres of African Americans



and poor whites by the planter forces it is strange that there are no reports of massacres perpetrated by Buffaloes, if they occurred. The sources are full of statements of the evils done by the Buffaloes, destruction, theft, intimidation, gunfights, and, without naming the cases, assassination. But there is no charge of massacre against the Buffaloes, not even a general statement without cases specified. One would think that the planter interest would hasten to publicize any mass killing of unarmed supporters of the Confederacy, especially civilians, as confirmation of their picture of the Buffaloes as savages and monstrous criminals. If the Buffaloes did not commit massacre upon the enemy population who were so often at their mercy, while the Confederate "home guard" in the three known cases slew the disarmed Buffaloes at Edenton and the unarmed civilians of Culpeper Island and Scratch Hall, the difference may be explained by a larger racial component in the rage of the planter and Anglo-Saxon guerrillas. If the general history of the maroons be taken as the gauge, the rage of the Buffaloes, with their loyal poor white or tawny component, was focused more on slavery, slaveholders, known active advocates of slavery, the rich, than on the white race or the Anglo-Saxon people as an ethnic group. Whereas the general history of American race relations supports the hypothesis that the rage of the Confederate guerrillas was more motivated by racism, directed primarily against the Black people, but also against the poor whites of the Buffaloes, social mixers with the Black people at best, tawny halfbreeds at worst.

The number of assassinations of Buffalo Captains reported may indicate that their leadership was suffering loss at a higher rate than that of the more cautious Confederates. If so the U.S. Army should have been anxious lest the level of Buffalo activity dropped. It is known that the Army was concerned that guerrillas wearing the U.S. uniform, attached to U.S. regiments, and not known to have violated rules of war, were being killed after capture along with the independent un-uniformed guerrillas, instead of being treated as prisoners of war.<sup>10</sup> Moreover for eighteen months, since the beginning of allied guerrilla activity by Buffaloes, the U.S. Army had taken no significant action in the field in support of its allies.

Thereupon in December 1863 two Virginia Colored Volunteer Regiments under Brigadier-General Edward A. Wild were ordered out from Norfolk by the commanding officer of the region, General Benjamin Butler. The orders were to conduct a brief but fierce campaign in retaliation for the killing of captured Union soldiers, mainly African American.<sup>11</sup> The Black Regiments began their show of strength through Princess Ann County, Virginia,<sup>12</sup> an indication that Buffalo companies were operating in that most eastern of the Virginia Dismal Swamp

counties, the farthest from the Union and Confederate lines around Richmond. Then the retaliatory expedition moved down the Dismal Swamp Canal, finally closing that inland waterway between Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound to Confederate use.<sup>13</sup> In North Carolina the regiments made a leisurely progress through Currituck, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan and Camden counties, ending at Elizabeth City,<sup>14</sup> which was occupied, it is said, by five thousand Black troops.<sup>15</sup> If so, one to two thousand Buffalo soldiers must have joined forces with the two regiments of Black regulars. Throughout the campaign the regiments burned whatever had been left on the plantations by the Buffaloes, hunted and killed or captured Confederate "home guard," gathered horses for the U.S. Cavalry, and liberated 2500 African Americans still held in bondage.<sup>16</sup> From a good vantage point an observer could trace the route taken by the expedition for a distance of many miles by the thick line of vultures ascending and descending upon the carcasses of slaughtered plantation herds. Members of slaveholder families were seized from their hiding places and carried back to Norfolk under guard as hostages for the future Confederate treatment of captured soldiers. During this campaign the expedition was known to the African Americans and poor whites of the region not as the Union Army but as The Army of Liberation.<sup>17</sup>

After the Civil War and Reconstruction the pro-Confederate leaders of Southern Anglo-Saxon society evaluated 1863, the year of the Buffalo, the ascendancy of Black and poor white guerrillas, as the most terrible experience in history for their class and society, the most awful assault of all time upon their values and way of life. At the opening of the twentieth century this is what was taught to young people in the public school textbook of North Carolina history. The Buffaloes were given an entire chapter, under the title "The Black Flag."<sup>18</sup> The reference was to the 'no quarter' policy followed in the guerrilla warfare, but must also have suggested to young minds the cruelty of pirates. The assessment of the time of Buffalo power was that the starvation, destruction and depredations suffered by the people of interior Virginia caught amongst the principal campaigns of the United States and Confederate Armies were "restful and happy" compared to what was suffered by members of Anglo-Saxon society at the hands of the Buffaloes. The agony of Anglo-Saxon Georgians as Sherman marched from Atlanta to the Sea were not as acute as the experience of Tidewater people in this region, for while Sherman's army came through and passed on, the Buffaloes remained, on and on. And Black Reconstruction after the War, when savage Blacks governed the South abetted by the dregs of white criminality, according to the pro-



Confederate picture, were "halcyon days" compared to the time of Buffalo power.<sup>19</sup>

In teaching their history to the youth the spokesmen of the lost cause of the Confederacy stressed the weekly raids upon decent people by Black and poor white bandits as the substance of Buffalo atrocity, but to bring home to youthful readers the thoroughness and extremism of Buffalo ruthlessness a specific example was also offered. When little children were seen by the Buffaloes with "toy" Confederate flags given to them by their elders, the homes of their families were pillaged in reprisal.<sup>20</sup>

The reason offered for the judgment that the Buffalo power was a greater enormity than the suffering inflicted by the Union Army in Virginia, Sherman's march through Georgia, or radical Reconstruction, was that the attacks of the Buffaloes and the defense against them constituted an internecine war.<sup>21</sup> And internecine it was, a war between Americans whose families had been here since the early eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, often related, Americans who through all that time had been engaged in struggle, sometimes quiet, sometimes furious, always hate-filled, between the classes and castes who enjoyed or were content with the slavery system, and the classes and castes who saw themselves as its victims and burned with unquenchable discontent.

With the return to Norfolk of the punitive expedition of Black regiments the organization and activity of the Buffaloes did not diminish. During the American Revolution the strength of the maroons around the Dismal Swamp had been such that the writ of the United States did not run to Princess Anne County, Virginia. Now in 1864 Buffalo domination of the countryside was such that the authority of the Confederate States of America did not extend to Princess Anne County or to Pasquotank, Currituck, Perquimans, Chowan and Camden.<sup>22</sup> With the majority of the population (Black and poor white) supporting the guerrillas as in the 1780s, and the United States' standing aside, the military-political independence of the maroons which had been maintained inside the Dismal Swamp for 150 years now extended in the 1860s to the open countryside of the entire region.

During the Civil War there was in North Carolina a powerful political movement, partly legal, participating in elections, and partly an illegal underground organization, which opposed the Confederacy and sought to take the state out of the War and back into the United States. The electoral leader who ran for Governor was William H. Holden, who was to be Radical Reconstruction Governor after the War. The underground organization called itself The Heroes of America.<sup>23</sup> In the western part of the state the Heroes did conduct widespread and successful guerrilla warfare, but its connections with the Buffaloes

appear to have been slight if any. This is because of sharp differences between the two in region, social composition, and motivation. The strength of the Holden and Heroes movement was in the western mountains, near the Tennessee Unionists, with outreach into the Piedmont but with small activity near the East Coast.<sup>24</sup> Its principal support and leadership were from small farmers and others of the non-slaveholding middle class; it did not admit African Americans to membership, and was not identified with the landless poor white caste.<sup>25</sup> And its concerns were for the preservation of the Union and the end of slaveholder political power by the abolition of slavery, rather than the suffering of the enslaved. In all respects the Buffalo movement differed, restricted to the plantation country of the East Coast, consisting of Africans and poor whites, and primarily concerned for the future welfare of those two castes. There may well have been connections at times between the white Unionist and the Buffalo movements, but the former avoided identification with the latter, and the latter were too busy with their guerrilla warfare to expend much energy in aid of Unionist politics or far away Unionist guerrillas.

After their experiences of 1863 however the pro-Confederate white population of the counties near the Dismal Swamp lost heart and formally withdrew from the struggle. They saw the dramatic expression of support for the Buffaloes by the U.S. Army, the Buffaloes' replacement of slain captains, the continued success of these war bands in tearing down efforts to rebuild the devastated region, and the inability of their own "home guard" to defend them from the Buffaloes.

The movement of the Anglo-Saxon community to surrender was encouraged by the Buffaloes and the United States, but initiated and conducted from within the pro-Confederate population. Resolutions were drawn up, addressed to the Confederate States of America: units of the Confederate Army had never been sent in to defend the region; the Home Guard was unable to provide protection for Confederate citizens; continued actions of the Home Guard only served to provoke Buffalo reprisals on the civilian population; therefore the Confederate States of America was requested to do one of two things, either to send in sufficient regular troops to hold and pacify the country, or else to cease aid and encouragement to the Confederate Home Guard and to order the same to cease its operations.

In five counties<sup>26</sup> the resolutions were debated among those people who considered themselves Confederate citizens, put to a formal public vote, and overwhelmingly passed.<sup>27</sup> In the few localities where a clear majority for the resolutions was not sure, such as Elizabeth City, Buffaloes did fill the neighborhood intimidating opponents.<sup>28</sup> But in



general the Confederate population considered the voting fair and the decision definitive.

It was a cunningly devised and most significant action, but not in respect to the policy of the Confederacy, nor was it intended to be despite the wording of the resolutions. No one could have expected a state at war to disavow its local military supporters, or the Confederate Army to spare regiments from its desperate battles elsewhere. The regional movement and vote were a declaration of non-support for the "home guard" guerrillas by the local planter and Anglo-Saxon society. Henceforth the pro-slavery vigilantes, never more 'regular' military units than the Buffaloes, became even less so, that militarily meaningless phenomenon, guerrillas without a sympathetic civilian population as base. They were now no more than terrorists in the narrowest and most idiot-brutal sense, a small minority of pro-slavery or white racist extremists repudiated by their own party and people.

The war was over in the region around the Dismal Swamp, a year or more before Appomattox, and without conquest by the Army of the United States. Vigilantes might occasionally still summon up the courage to murder families when their men were away from home, but this was not war. There were no more Buffalo raids in the region; armed struggle between African Americans and poor whites and Anglo-Saxon society ceased. Members of both societies at last turned to the painful, slow beginnings of physical reconstruction and the resumption of production.

With the surrender of the Confederate citizenry the Buffaloes had won the precise victory for which maroons had fought during a century and a half. And the verdict of the Quaker Uprising of 1708-1711 was, for a time, reversed.

The Fort on the Chowan built two years before by Jack Ferelis was now finally abandoned, no longer of use to the Buffaloes. For a year its importance had been diminishing as the amount of Confederate property remaining to be destroyed dwindled, and there were fewer and fewer persons bound in slavery to be freed. As the attention of the Buffaloes began to turn elsewhere, companies remaining in the Dismal Swamp counties to guard the peace were under the command of Captain James J. "Jemsey" McLane (commissioned lieutenant, 35th U.S. Infantry, formerly the First North Carolina Colored Volunteers).<sup>29</sup>

The Buffaloes were aware that the liberation of their own country would be of brief duration unless the Confederacy and slavery elsewhere on the Continent were destroyed. At the same time that they won their victory at home the Civil War as a whole entered its final phase. During the last year of the War the remaining parts of the Mississippi Valley were subdued by the Union, the devastation wrought by

Sherman's Army cut the Confederacy in two, and Lincoln at last found a general for the Army of the Potomac who wanted to fight, Grant. The War became a ceaseless series of vast, bloody trench campaigns around the Confederate capital in central Virginia. Both sides sent in all the power at their command. The Confederacy with its back to the wall fought on grimly, desperately hoping for some such miracle as a negotiated peace from the North's mounting grief before the terrible toll of dead. The United States too fought desperately before Richmond, its final strategy the destruction of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and the taking of the capital, which, it correctly believed, would end the War. What had always been an important theater of the War was now decisive.

Therefore free after their own victory the guerrillas of the Dismal Swamp turned towards the Richmond front for their final campaign. The director of that campaign was the last paramount chief of the maroons and commander-in-chief of the Buffaloes, John Hodges. He was African American, a resident of the sector of the Dismal Swamp in ever-rebellious Princess Anne County.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps he had been captain of the Princess Anne Buffaloes of which there are hints from the time when Jack Ferelis had been paramount chief.<sup>31</sup> To fulfill his new responsibilities as commander of all the Buffalo companies it was necessary for John Hodges to remove his headquarters from his coastal county, inland to the center or to the other side of the Swamp. At the same time, to help in the battle for Richmond the majority of Buffalo companies who had so long fought to the south and southwest of the Swamp in North Carolina relocated to the west and northwest of the Swamp on both sides of the state line.

John Hodges, like Peter II and Jack Ferelis before him was a man of exceptional organizing abilities as well as the guerrilla skills prerequisite for maroon command. He was affectionately known by his men as General Specks, a probable reference to eyeglasses he wore.<sup>32</sup> It is doubtful that many maroons possessed or wore such things, and it may have been a memorable sight to see one's captain returning from a fierce encounter with his spectacles still firmly on his nose. His "specks" may also have suggested his intellectual sharpness which was to prove itself in politics after the War as it had in military operations during the War's last year.

The last military strategy adopted by the maroons under the leadership of Specks Hodges was classic in that it restricted itself to guerrilla methods without yielding to the temptation, after the recent great victory in Carolina, to take on tasks of conventionally trained soldiers, and yet at the same time pressed guerrilla methods to their limits in the effort to make a maximum contribution to the success of



Grant's Army in front of Richmond. The strategy was twofold: one, to pin down as many of Lee's troops as possible to remove them from the defense of the Confederate capital, and two, to limit provisions of food for the rest of Lee's Army who were in the battle with the Union Army.

The first part of the strategy was achieved by scattering hundreds of Buffaloes, for hundreds would be necessary, in small units in a very thin line just inside the Dismal Swamp along the entire western stretch of that wilderness, facing Richmond and the battles raging around the city.<sup>33</sup> The guerrillas showed themselves frequently enough to secure the serious attention of the Confederate Army. Along the miles of the Swamp line, guerrillas appearing long enough to be seen, then re-entering the Swamp and moving very swiftly inside along the edge to reappear in a totally different segment to other Confederates, could give the impression of different bands, the apparent total of men much greater than the reality. The Confederate Army could suspect that they were the same relatively few maroons, but it could never be sure. The Buffaloes made feints out into the open country away from the Swamp towards the west, as if they were contemplating a raid upon one of the Confederate positions around Richmond. Again the enemy probably considered the likelihood that these were mock attacks, especially after their repetition, but again could not be sure. A wrong judgment could lead to a disaster. A small and suicidal guerrilla band might slip in where no regular Union Army unit could go successfully, into the rear of a Confederate position. Though the damage they could do alone might be small, the confusion caused by their attack if combined with a Union Army frontal onslaught might result in a battle lost.

Failing intelligence on the Buffaloes' true intentions the Confederates did not have the choice to ignore the guerrillas poised along the edge of the Swamp. Their only choices were to divert part of the attention of their Army at Richmond from Grant's Army facing them, to round the clock alertness in the rear of the positions, or to contain the Buffalo soldiers at the Swamp. The Confederate Army chose the latter course as less likely to lose engagements on the battlefield.

Therefore during the last year of the War the Confederacy built trenches and earthworks along the miles of the Swamp and established troops on permanent picket duty facing and observing the Swamp.<sup>34</sup> The maroons maintained sufficient contact with these troops to ensure that they would remain.

Thus though the Confederacy secured the rear of the positions of the Army of Northern Virginia they paid the price, of lessening the number of Confederate soldiers in battle. With the Confederacy already suffering a severe shortage of manpower, this part of the maroons last

campaign made a significant contribution to Grant's gradual wearing down of the Confederate Army, and to the final victory.

In the meantime the other part of the Buffalo strategy was being carried out farther west and to the south of the war front around Richmond. In this area of North Carolina west of the Dismal Swamp region and up to the Virginia border what had begun as the seventeenth century herds of the "civilized Indians" and in the eighteenth century in white hands became the prey of maroon raiders was now in the nineteenth century the principal cattle industry of the upper South. The country was still grazing land, and Virginia's most important source for beef when there was any beef for Virginia. Relatively close to Richmond, these herds in the early years of the War had provided meat for the civilian population of that region and more importantly for the War, for the Army of Northern Virginia. Besides what fresh beef might have been available, this was the source of the dried beef that furnished energy for soldiers in the trenches or on the march. Now the source was cut off by the guerrillas, not as of old in small raids but in a permanent and massive operation. The *Richmond Examiner* reported (in 1864):

(It is) difficult to find words of description . . . of the wild and terrible consequences of the negro raids in this obscure theatre of the war . . . there are said to be from five to six hundred negroes, who are not in the regular military organizations of the Yankees, but who, outlawed and disowned by their masters, lead the lives of banditti, roving the country with fire . . .

This present theatre of guerrilla warfare has, at this time, a most important interest for our authorities. It is described as a rich country . . . and one of the most important sources of meat supplies that is now accessible to our armies . . .<sup>35</sup>

When it be recalled that hunger riots in Richmond constituted a problem in morale and security for the Confederacy, and that pro-Confederate historians attribute the defeat of the Confederacy to the malnutrition of its soldiers as much as to Union Army strength and skill, then this contribution of guerrillas from the Dismal Swamp takes on major significance.

It is difficult to conceive of two more useful tasks within the scope of guerrilla warfare that the Buffaloes could have taken up during the last year of the Civil War than the immobilization of part of Lee's Army, and the reduction of food supplies for the Confederate troops.

General John Hodges, unlike his predecessors, of necessity devoted a larger proportion of his energy to coordination of each of the two



campaigns than to personal leadership of operations in the field. For the first time in maroon history the war bands were operating as large unified organizations rather than as small separate units. Even in the very extensive guerrilla campaigns during the American Revolution and in 1862 and 1863 the company was the unit of command, each independently determining upon and carrying out its raids, which were necessarily limited in scope and duration. Coordination, a duty of the paramount chiefs, was limited to the encouragement of cooperation between companies, exchange of information and sometimes synchronization of separate attacks. The paramount chiefs' time was proportionately more spent in personal participation in battle and other modes of charismatic leadership. But General Hodges was responsible for some hundreds of guerrillas along the edge of the Dismal Swamp whose game with the Confederates required constant cooperation, and close to a thousand troops out in the cow country whose task was just as specific and on-going and whose relatively exposed position required even more central day-to-day planning. There were more than the five or six hundred Black guerrillas in that command: there were additional Buffalo companies of white (presumably white and tawny) guerrillas. Hodges' field commander in the campaign to cut off Confederate food supplies was Captain John Lang, an African American whose lightness of skin<sup>36</sup> was perhaps an asset in his command of white as well as Black troops. From maroon tradition it was undoubtedly essential that General Specks make frequent appearances among his men in both fields of operation, and sometimes participate in an engagement with the enemy, but his major work was cut out for him at his headquarters in the Swamp keeping two such delicate campaigns secure, flexible and efficient.

The day after the fall of Richmond, April 4, 1865, the Dismal Swamp maroon presence was most emphatically felt in the brand-new politics of the South. In Norfolk the first Black political (election) organization of the South was founded, under the chairmanship of the Reverend William Hodges, a member and a spiritual leader of the Dismal Swamp maroon people and a cousin of the still paramount chief John Hodges.<sup>37</sup> The public mass meeting at which this organization was founded was the first held by African Americans in any of the states of the South proper, the South of Anglo-Saxon and planter domination. There had been a meeting three months earlier in French Creole New Orleans where race relations had always been more flexible than in Anglo-Saxon America, and there had been several since in Tennessee, a border state sociologically and politically between North and South and never an effective part of the Confederacy. Nor had these several meetings in two atypical states of the South formed an ongoing

political organization. The first such was founded by the side of the Dismal Swamp under maroon chairmanship.<sup>38</sup>

Radical Reconstruction with Black voting and governmental leadership was not to be until 1868; in the meantime planters would continue to rule the South; but in 1865 this association thoroughly organized the African American communities of Norfolk and Portsmouth and the counties by the Dismal Swamp and established chapters in the other eastern Virginia towns of Hampton, Elizabeth City, Old Point Comfort, Yorktown and Williamsburg.<sup>39</sup> The organization named itself the Colored Monitor Union, for the famous U.S. ironclad warship *The Monitor*, which had been stationed at Norfolk and had defeated the Confederate ironclad *The Merrimac* in those waters in the first naval battle between iron ships.<sup>40</sup> The name also suggested the function of monitoring or warning and instructing the Republic on its path towards fuller freedom. It may also have suggested the traditional position of African American social action, half underground and half above ground, like the striking half submerged design of the warship *Monitor*.

The program of the Colored Monitor Union was unity among the colored people, mutual enlightenment on the suffrage issue, the petitioning of Congress for the franchise and assistance in the final defeat of the enemies of the United States.<sup>41</sup> Special sections were set up to organize labor unions for the protection of freedmen laborers and land cooperatives for the obtaining of farms by the landless.<sup>42</sup> Other large mass meetings followed regularly after the initial one, and an even larger meeting was held for African Americans who did not choose to join the Monitor Union so there might be maximum unity among all, those of slave, 'free' and maroon origin.<sup>43</sup> Also to weld unity among the elements of the Black population Dr. Thomas Bayne was selected as principal spokesman of the Monitor Union. A dentist, he had been born a slave in North Carolina, escaped to seaport Norfolk where he led the 'underground railroad,' and fleeing once again to Massachusetts was elected city councilman in New Bedford.<sup>44</sup> He was an orator who could move Anglo-Saxon as well as African American audiences, and a Black Nationalist who believed that African Americans were a distinct people and must form their alliances only from an independent<sup>45</sup> base, a philosophy acceptable to the Monitor Union and probably highly congenial to the maroon leadership with their heritage of independent nationhood.

Although a Black organization, the Monitor Union and its extended political alliances included a small but politically significant group of white supporters especially in the immediate Dismal Swamp cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, about 250 who, under urban scrutiny and



when the Monitor could offer no political rewards, publicly and formally identified themselves. They were not from the North or hitherto respectable Southerners converted to Republicanism but Poor Whites, a fact shown by the Monitor's demand for the enfranchisement of disfranchised whites, a demand in which these persons joined as grieved parties.<sup>46</sup> The old Dismal Swamp region's ancient alliance of Black and Poor White persons survived the end of the Civil War at least this year.

The month after the founding of the Monitor Union, organized now by wards, the membership demanded the vote in the state elections, and at the risk of life, representatives tested the right in each polling place of Norfolk.<sup>47</sup> Denied, the Monitor conducted its own unrecognized elections for the state offices, setting up a polling place in the Black community, and delivered a large and unanimous vote for the (white) Republican candidates, who were defeated in the legal elections for want of Black voters. The Monitor printed up 5000 copies of a report on the situation and their project, and forwarded full details to Radical Republican Congressmen in Washington.<sup>48</sup> In the Fall the also early pioneering political Black activists of Louisiana took up and extended the Monitor move of holding unrecognized state elections as pressure towards Black enfranchisement.<sup>49</sup>

Another dramatic and innovative campaign was launched by the Monitor at the end of the year. Meetings were held first at Norfolk and then at the other towns organized by the Monitor Union in eastern Virginia, and elections held for delegates to Washington. The lobby exerted considerable pressure on the Radical Republican Congressmen.<sup>50</sup> These had not yet worked out their program for Radical Reconstruction, much less demanded or won national power from President Johnson. The eastern Virginia delegation played its part towards this end. While they were in Washington there was also a delegate elected by Black Radicals of Louisiana, lobbying for the same end, Black enfranchisement and other civil rights.<sup>51</sup> Throughout 1865 there seems to have been communication between the two pioneer centers for African American political action, New Orleans and the Dismal Swamp region.

By late 1867, when the Radical Republicans in Congress had taken over the national government and Black voters were in process of helping to elect Radical Reconstruction Constitutional Conventions in the Southern States, Black communities everywhere were organizing themselves in Union Leagues and the Republican Party, though they had not yet organized as thoroughly as the African American communities of eastern Virginia, led by the Monitor Union, two and a half years earlier. Throughout the South the Black voters elected

Republican majorities to the Constitutional Conventions, in Virginia 65 out of 100 delegates, of which 25 were African Americans. The Black leadership at the Convention immediately made it clear to more conservative white Republicans that demands of the African American community would have to be written into the Constitution, universal manhood suffrage, public schools, state social service institutions, or else they would form their own party and contest future elections against conservative Republicans. Of the three leaders of the Black caucus, two were from the Dismal Swamp region, Thomas Bayne, the spokesman of the Monitor Union from Norfolk, and Willis Hodges from Princess Anne County and the brother of the recent maroon paramount chief John Hodges.<sup>52</sup>

Virginia had its Radical Reconstruction Constitution, but the Virginia general election of 1869 unlike most in the South did not return a Radical Republican government, conservatives, (Democrats) winning a narrow majority of the vote.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, unlike some Southern states which did elect Radical Republican governments at this time, Virginia was to experience upsurges of Black political power, election victories and participation in state administrations through much of the Century.

In that Virginia Legislature of 1869, the first for which Black citizens voted, both Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties were represented by men of what had been the Dismal Swamp maroon community.<sup>54</sup>

For that community was no more. The maroons had come out of the Dismal Swamp, some at once after the defeat of the Confederacy, others by gradual visits accustoming themselves to the life outside. Together with freedmen and persons who had been of the 'free' Black community they now constituted one African American community. Now what had been maroon heritage would be a part of the heritage of all Black Americans.

We have seen that those who had been members of the Dismal Swamp maroon community now played leading roles in the new political leadership of the South, their region pioneering in Black political leadership of the South, their region pioneering in Black political action, their organization the foremost in the Black section of the state Republican Party. And as recurs in maroon history, family relationships, the kinfolk, were a vehicle for the expression of the life and will of the community. The leadership family now was Hodges.

There was the Reverend William Hodges, first Chairman of the Colored Monitor Union, the Black political power in eastern Virginia, and a cousin of the last maroon paramount chief.



There was the Honorable Willis Hodges, Delegate of the County of Princess Anne to the Constitutional Convention of Virginia, and a brother of the last maroon paramount chief.

There was the Honorable Charles E. Hodges, first Black State Representative of the County of Norfolk to the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia (1869–1871), and another brother of the last maroon paramount chief.

And another Hodges was the State Representative elected from Princess Anne County. These four are the visible political personnel of the former maroons, who led the Monitor Union, which directed the African American half of the Republican Party of eastern Virginia, which in turn led the African American half of the Republican Party of Virginia.

The Hodges who was elected the first Black State Representative of the County of Princess Anne to the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia (1869–1871) was the Honorable John Hodges himself, head of the Hodges clan, last paramount chief of the Dismal Swamp maroons, still General Specks to the Buffalo veterans who worked for the Monitor Union and the Republican Party.

The last paramount chief of the maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp was the first political 'boss' of a Black-controlled political party organization in the United States. 150 years of history was fulfilled (See Table, Page 328).

Continuity and Community: The Paramount Chiefs of the Dismal  
Swamp Maroon Community

<u>Rulers</u>	<u>Possible Terms</u>	<u>Known Dates</u>
Captain Peter I	1708–1714	1709–10
The Tuscarora Chiefs	1714–1731	After 1714
Captain Spencer	1731–1745	Before 1745
Scratch Hall	1745–1755	After 1745
Successor		
Unknown	1755–1770	none
Captain Josiah Phillips	1770–1778	To 1778
Captain Levi Sykes	1778–1790	After 1778
General Caleb	1790–1800	1792
General Thomas Copper	1800–1807	1802
General Peter II	1807–1813	1810
Captain Mingo	1813–1818	Around 1820
Captain Pompey	1818–1822	After 1812; before
Little		1822
General Robert	1822–1824	1823–1824
Ferebee		
Unknown	1824–1831	To 1831
Father Gamby Gholar	1831–1840	1840s or 1850s
Father Alick	1840–1852	1850s on
General Osman	1852–1862	1856
Captain Jack Ferelis	1862–1863	1862–1863
Captain John Hodges	1863–1868	1864 on

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Benbury Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales of North Carolina History* (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards and Broughton, 1901), p. 236; Jesse Forbes Pugh, *Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N.C.: n.p., 1957), p. 162, 173.



<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>6</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, pp. 235, 239.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Dillard, *Historical Reminiscences: Centre Hill* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), fifth page (unnumbered). The place of the reminiscences is Chowan County, North Carolina. The copy used is in the North Carolina Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library.

<sup>8</sup> J.H. Garrett, "A Historic Sketch of the County of Chowan," *The Albemarle Times*, n.d., clipping in North Carolina Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

<sup>9</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), p. 177.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press 1962), p. 225; John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 177.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 179.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 156.

<sup>16</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, pp. 176–78, 180; Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 234. The author states that the "Tales" are non-fiction on pages ii and iii, and the school system underwrites them on page iv. For more of this evaluation of the time of the Buffalo, see Richard Benbury Creecy, "A Dread Time," in Pasquotank Historical Society, *Year Book, 1954–1955*, vol. 1 (Elizabeth City, N.C.: n.p., 1955[?]), p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Creecy, *Grandfather's Tales*, p. 234.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–36.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, pp. 231, 236.

<sup>23</sup> Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), pp. 107–35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 115–17, 112–23, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 181.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181n.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Dillard, *The Civil War in Chowan County, North Carolina* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 19; Garrett, "Historical Sketch"; Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, p. 177n.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Dey White, *Gleanings in the History of Princess Anne County* (n.p.: n.p., 1924), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 9, notes 32 and 42.

<sup>32</sup> White, *Gleanings*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 244.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Herbert Aptheker, "Slave Guerrilla Warfare," in Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 243.

<sup>37</sup> Aptheker, "Organizational Activities of Southern Negroes, 1865," in *To Be Free*, p. 232n.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241n.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143–44, 233n.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138–39.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233n; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 236–37.

<sup>46</sup> Aptheker, "Organizational Activities," pp. 140, 241n.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233n.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140–42.

<sup>49</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880* (New York: Athenæum, 1973), p. 462.

<sup>50</sup> Aptheker, "Organizational Activities," pp. 161–62, 241n.

<sup>51</sup> DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 463.



<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 541–42; Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 236; Aptheker, “Organizational Activities,” p. 232n.

<sup>53</sup> DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 545.

<sup>54</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, p. 243; Aptheker, “Organizational Activities,” p. 232n.

## Part II

### A Black and Tawny Rome

The Great Dismal Swamp as a Spiritual  
Center For the Upper South



## Chapter 13

### The Snake Lord and Mistress Grace: The Development of African American Spiritism in The Dismal Swamp

A social history of the maroons of the Dismal Swamp must devote considerable attention to the spiritual culture of the interior community and settlements adjacent to the Swamp. This is not because African Americans were 'more religious' than Anglo-Saxons (though as a people they may have been, in some senses of the phrase). It is because the Great Dismal Swamp was held to be a holy place by people of nearby states, and within the Dismal Swamp and on the Dismal Swamp edges for 250 years there were spiritual leaders whose help was sought and leadership accepted far beyond the region. For the history of African American communities in other localities such an emphasis on religious culture would not be appropriate. A parallel is the history of the Medieval Italian city states: the history of Rome emphasizes religious matters; the histories of Florence, Milan and Venice do not. The Dismal Swamp was a Rome for the African American and related communities of the upper South.

The historic spiritual center of African American culture in the deep South is well known: New Orleans, and the bayous of Louisiana. There may have been other spiritual centers, now unknown, remote both from the Dismal Swamp and New Orleans, such as in the regions of coastal South Carolina, Georgia and East Florida, or interior Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. The entire South, Black and white, has been long recognized as rich in 'folklore.' However rich the popular culture in mystical beliefs and practices, most of the South was not as imbued with expressions of the uncanny as the spiritual centers of New Orleans and the Dismal Swamp.

The spiritual activity of which the Dismal Swamp community was a center was both religious and magical, and often a mixture of the two. The association of religion and (benign) magic characteristic of the African component of African American spiritual culture has a number of explanations. For one, the symbols of religion may be used for magical purposes in many or most of the world cultures. If the symbol is used prayerfully, in petition to the Divine Who may or may not grant the prayer, the act is religious. If the symbol is used in a 'charm' which must, automatically, cause the effect desired, the act is magical. An example is the use of the Name of God in Medieval European Jewish and Christian kaballa to force the occurrence of a supernatural event. In similar fashion African Americans sometimes used the symbols of the Holy African Spirits in magical incantations to heal or defend from enemies, in a spirit clinical rather than religious, while at other times the Holy Spirits were venerated, praised, thanked and humbly petitioned for blessings in a spirit completely religious. The same person might make use of the symbols of the Holy Spirits in both types of activity, religious faith and magical manipulation. Sometimes the person invoking the Holy Spirits might not be sure whether his ritual was of faith or sorcery, so confused the feelings he held and the actions, of the ritual. If religion and magic so often intermix that they are best considered one idea, the supernatural, then this is true for all religions, not merely the African.

In Africa the distinction between priest and magician was usually as clear as between minister and psychotherapist in contemporary western society, one the leader of congregational worship of venerated sacred Beings, the other a practitioner in private consultations who offered helpful processes akin to the medical arts. But in one respect the African Spiritist religious faith is closer than is European Christianity to the practice of benign magic. African religion focuses upon the this-worldly problems of daily human living; European religion is most concerned with the other-worldly problem of eternal salvation. Thus African religion and magic both seek the solution of problems of everyday living, the former by worshipful petition, the latter by formulas of automatic working.<sup>1</sup>

In the Western Hemisphere the hitherto officially understood distinctions between African religion and magic, in ritual and more importantly attitude of seeker, became sometimes blurred. In slavery it was not always possible, with the accidents of purchase, for a plantation to have both a priest and a magician. This would be especially true on smaller plantations. Under such circumstances the priest might seek to meet the needs of his parishioners for private consultation as well as conducting his rightful work of congregational



worship, or the magician right seek to meet his clients' religious needs by leading worship, an office for which he was not trained. They did the best they could under the conditions of oppression, but at times the confusing of religion and magic was inevitable.

One other reason for the association of religion and magic within the African component of African American culture was white racism. Slaveholders were at least as uneasy at the practice of African religion as of magic, both signs of independence. Moreover European Christianity viewed the "heathen" religions in general as devilish, as devilish as the most sinister witchcraft. The white church did not care to distinguish between African American religion and magic, however pious and filled with the spirit of true worship the former might in fact be. And sometimes white racism worked its effects within the minds of Black people. At times an African American might invoke a much loved, kindly, helpful Holy Spirit, well aware that the Spirit was a creature and messenger of the one and only God, and filled with a sense of high religious adoration, yet at the same time uneasily and unreasonably feel that what he did was somehow wrong, superstitious, magical, even diabolic.

Despite all difficulties, the line between religion and magic was frequently maintained, African worship was often conducted in a spirit of religious faith, and some worshippers felt no guilt absorbed from Anglo-Saxon attitudes. But in the Western Hemisphere there were real and widespread problems in maintaining distinct the heritages of religion and magic. The universal possibility of using religious symbols for magical purposes, and the similar goals of African religion and magic (help in the challenges of earthly life) increased the danger. The necessary mingling of the roles of priest and magician on the plantation, and insidious inroads of anti-African prejudice, were at the heart of the problem.

Thus the spiritual activity of which the Dismal Swamp was a center included the African American Spiritist faith, magic, and a broad, mingled middle ground—partly religious, partly magical, not precisely defined by those who practice it. In all three aspects of spiritual activity the African heritage was reinforced or supplemented by Native American and British peasant traditions of religion and magic.

The richness of Dismal Swamp "folklore" has been demonstrated in the political and general social history and prehistory of the maroons: Governor Nathaniel Batts of the independent Roanoke Government with his devotion to Tuscarora ritual and his efforts to present the Quaker founder George Fox as a Wonder-worker; the quakers' in their emotional worship adopting Quaker inner light and unstructured meetings without Quaker discipline; the network of plantation spiritual leaders with

which maroon paramount chief Peter II was concerned; Father Gholar and his supervisory spiritual Council; Father Alick whose beast of burden associated with Nat Turner took on wondrous legendary qualities; the healing properties alleged for Dismal Swamp water (which some eventually called an Elixir of Life, bringing immortality to those who drank only of it);<sup>2</sup> the haunted Black Mingo Pocason and the cryptic Aunt Ferebee; Culpeper Island's fraternity of men and bears; the ritual bathing and the Queen who spoke with birds at Congo Village. But the exceptional spiritual role of the Dismal Swamp lay not in this wealth of lore, but in the reputation of the place, and the leadership exerted by some of its people.

The Native American people deemed the Dismal Swamp an uncanny place before the first English settlement of the New World. On sixteenth century maps of North America a swamp appeared between Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound marked, in French, *Marais Maudit*, The Accursed Swamp.<sup>3</sup> Possibly the Native Americans believed the Dismal Swamp to be accursed. More likely it was holy ground for one Native American Nation and called damned by an enemy Nation for the war spells worked in it, the canard passed on to European explorers. Considering that the Spirits of the Swamp were viewed as benign by the later people of the Swamp, it is most likely that the Native Americans had considered it a holy place, and that the Christian who labeled the map called it hellish for the 'heathen' worship of 'devils' which took place within its boundaries.

↖ To planter society of course, the supernatural reputation of the Dismal Swamp was Satanic, since the place offered refuge to slaves. As part of the view of the Swamp as diabolic, some familiar with the Bible, but not very familiar, associated the name Dismal with Dysmas, the thief who was crucified with Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Any Black person of the region truly familiar with the Bible must have smiled inwardly at this. For it was to Dysmas that the Lord said, "This day you will be in heaven with me." And Dysmas, like the maroons, was an outlaw. Perhaps some Christian maroons called their home the Great Dysmas Swamp.

Black, Poor White and Native American-descended people looked to the Dismal Swamp with awe, but the awe that is directed toward great supernatural power that is beneficent, not the fear of evil Powers. Persons sought help for themselves, not harm for others, from the Spirits of the Swamp, save as harm might come to evil men, their enemies.

If not the original cause, then a most impelling contributing cause to the awe in which the Dismal Swamp was held by the original inhabitants and those who came later was the physical aspect of the place. Natural features, such as the placid beauty of the lake called



Drummond and the strangeness of the great forest of giant reeds called The Green Sea, the absence of decay, the water black in color, fresh though by the salt sea, and never becoming stale, and above all the vastness of the Swamp, the largest swampland of the Atlantic coastlands, gave the Dismal Swamp its uniqueness and its impact upon the emotions of those who experienced the place. A small swamp is a nuisance, a large swamp a place to hunt or fish, and hide, but a swamp of two thousand square miles is a wonder.

The charisma of the Dismal Swamp was attached to the Swamp's well-known features. The outsider lost in Scratch Hall was likely to encounter beings dangerous to him, 'unnatural' as well as human.<sup>5</sup> Lake Drummond, though relatively accessible after the building of the Canal in the early nineteenth century, was still dreaded and shunned by outsiders. Night lights that glowed and flickered throughout the Swamp were most often seen across the Lake's silent expanse and marshy shoreline.<sup>6</sup> A terrified outsider reported that he had seen in broad daylight a white deer pursued into the Lake by a dog, and both pulled under the water by something.<sup>7</sup> To the south of Lake Drummond the uncanny Green Sea, its thickly growing fifteen feet reeds billowing with the winds, was said to rest upon caverns from which the Spirits of the place arose.<sup>8</sup>

The most haunted, or holy, place of the Dismal Swamp was the grassy waste to the north of Lake Drummond, known as Paradise Old Field. Here it was said, underground tunnels, not made by man, came from Lake Drummond and The Green Sea, through which the Spirits made their way to the Field on great occasions.<sup>9</sup> Edmund Ruffin, the southern agricultural journalist, in geographical observations on the Dismal Swamp that eschew all mention of maroons or folklore, states matter-of-factly that Lake Drummond is believed to be bottomless, or to communicate with the sea by underground passages.<sup>10</sup>

Paradise Old Field, where the passages were said to meet, according to legend was the place where the chief God or Holy Spirit of the underworld and His Lady descended to Their home and ascended to be of service, or fear, to men.<sup>11</sup> It was He and She who were the lights that moved through the Field at night, like the lesser, unpersonalized Jack-a-ma-lanterns, supernatural wandering night lights widespread in Southern folklore.<sup>12</sup> Some central Dismal Swamp myth, untold to outsiders, adhered to this place. The underworld Lord and Lady and the grottoes supposed to underlay the Swamp as a network for other Holy Spirits were in some way related to serpents of spiritual meaning.<sup>13</sup> Outsiders with classical education on hearing these legends associated the supernatural King and Queen of the Swamp with Pluto and Persephone.<sup>14</sup>

Through the generations of settlement around and within the Dismal Swamp, it was spoken of as a place of more than natural wonders, especially by night. Eerie sounds, neither of man nor beast, were said to be heard from the depths of the Swamp.<sup>15</sup> Most residents around the outer edge and along the Canal swore that bizarre lights of unknown origin were to be seen there of nights.

The legend of the lights appears to be related to Tuscarora beliefs a century and more earlier. In the second decade of the eighteenth century the Swiss nobleman Graffenreid had attended a Tuscarora burial at night, and from the tomb saw arise "a little flaming fire, like a big candle-light." It rose straight up, crossed the cabin of the deceased, and continued over the swamp for a mile and a half. The mourners considered it a good omen. Graffenreid wondered if it were some physical phenomenon, like sulfurous vapors. Most Tuscaroras could not explain it, but a priest told him: For a sorcerer to ascend to the highest grade of his profession, he must seize one of these small flying flames which flicker from tree to tree. It will become a tiny living creature, his familiar.<sup>16</sup>

In the nineteenth century outsiders to the Swamp made efforts to explain the night lights naturally. A visitor to the Swamp reported that he had seen the night light up phosphorescent and unreal with tremulous gleams on sky, air and water. He attributed the phenomena to millions of fireflies.<sup>17</sup> Other outsiders offered the explanation of fireflies, and others suggested foxfire (phosphorescence), or the glow of burning peat, or methane gas released by peat, or the glowing eyes of animals.<sup>18</sup> But most native to the Swamp country spoke of "wind lights," found only in the Dismal Swamp, when before the coming of a rain the night sky lit up with a faint, shifting glow. Some whispered of brighter lights closer to the ground that were borne by "the terrible 'people' of the mist."<sup>19</sup>

But maroons and other African Americans and Poor Whites could not speak of the supernatural persons who carried these lights as terrible or terrifying.

Instead they said, "Often soft lights are used by the Gods to guide lost slaves." And they said, these Holy Spirits used their lights to guide members of the Swamp settlements who, on some nighttime errand, had strayed from the path.<sup>20</sup>

What "Gods" could these be, spoken of by the folk of the Dismal Swamp as protectors of lost slaves? They could only have been the Gods of old Guinea, the Holy Spirits of Africa.

Spirits of the dead, ghouls, devils, dragon-like monsters, all familiar to European folklore abounded in Swamp talk, and may have limited the activity of slave-catchers and militia. The Dismal Swamp



people spoke freely to outside inquirers of ghosts, hoodoo magic and evil spirits. But when an outsider was near they rarely spoke of the Holy Spirits, the Old Gods, for these were the Guardians of the people. This was not puttin' on, or hoodoo talk, but sacred doctrine of a religious faith.<sup>21</sup>

Though maroon culture in general was compounded of European and Native American as well as African elements, the distinctive religion of the Dismal Swamp was African. Gods, spiritual help for escaped slaves, a whole assembly or hierarchy of Gods or Holy Spirits, Their work as guardian angels or patron saints for suffering persons, spiritual assistance to escaped slaves, sacred serpents and underground grottoes, these form a pattern outside European tradition however archaic, and also more in the African than the Native American heritage.

Now the meaning of Paradise Old Field is clearer. It was the sacred ground where the great and benign Serpent King and Serpent Queen of West Africa came, accompanied by other Holy Spirits. And if They came to the Field, this can only mean that people came, maroons came, to worship. For the priests of West Africa say that men cannot live without the Holy Spirits and the Holy Spirits cannot live without man; that is to say, in African Spiritism the Holy Spirits cannot manifest Themselves except by possession of one or more of Their devotees, during congregational worship, in the Holy Dance. If the grottoes believed to lie below the Field were the homes of the sacred serpents associated with the place, and the serpents were the symbols of the King and Queen of the underworld who arose from that ground, then Paradise Old Field was a dancing ground, a meeting place for worship, the principal temple of the maroon community of the Dismal Swamp, as the name of the place suggests.

The quakers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century Roanoke society just south of the Dismal Swamp may have played an important role in the transmission of African (and Native American) religious beliefs and practices to Poor Whites, and the general exchange of African, Native American and British peasant religion and folklore. Accepting with enthusiasm George Fox's preachments of free, unstructured religious meetings in which each worshipper did as he was moved, and an Inner Light in every person which would speak spiritual Truth if waited for, the quakers rejected Quaker discipline and therefore the certainty of sound Bible doctrine which the Inner Light always came round to in disciplined Quaker meetings.<sup>22</sup> In England during the few years of the Quaker movement before George Fox came to lead, there had been no such discipline, and out of unstructured meetings and the Inner Light had come extraordinary 'heresies' and extravagant religious behavior. George Fox's concern as leading Quaker, besides bringing the

Quaker message to new places, was to place Christian discipline alongside Christian freedom. The quakers rejected the former, while welcoming the latter.

Here where the individualized testifying of each person was unlimited by any structure of worship or doctrine was the ideal meeting of white; Black and Native American to observe one another's statements and other religious behavior, and if so moved, to imitate. The Tuscaroras were at least as enthusiastic for such a procedure as were the white indentured servant fugitives, and Black people though few in numbers still were present and interested. That wonders beyond known Christian practice and belief would emerge from these quaker meetings was probably encouraged by Roanoke Governor Batts' popularizing of George Fox's mission not as Christian witness but as the working of miracles, practically sorcery.)

Not only in Albemarle North Carolina but in other still wilderness areas of the Colonies George Fox and other orthodox Quaker missionaries were dismayed to find unbiblical teaching and practices in Quaker-inspired meetings, and quick to disavow them.<sup>23</sup> The heresies and extravagances in the American Colonies were rather different from those with which George Fox had coped in England. In the old country there had been self-deification, and the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, in the belief that the Saved were beyond the Law. In seventeenth and early eighteenth century America however the 'errors' of 'pretended' Quakers decried by Fox and his associates were extravagant shouting and body movements at meeting, and heresies associated with Native American and African contacts. On Long Island in 1675, a Quaker missionary found and disavowed a meeting in which the worship was the Holy Dance.<sup>24</sup> This practice was hardly of European origin. The Holy Dance had not been a part of the worship of the extreme sects of the Protestant Reformation, and was dying out or strictly limited and unpublicized in the few Catholic parishes which had practiced it. That the Holy Dance on Long Island was of African (and Native American) origin is indicated by the practice of the leader of the Free Meeting: He blackened his face to lead the ritual dance. When the amazed Quaker asked him why, he replied, "It was his Justification and Sanctification."<sup>25</sup> The descent of the Holy Spirit after salvation came in the form of religious ecstasy shown to mankind by the dark-skinned peoples.

Farther south in the wilderness between Maryland and Virginia another Quaker missionary in 1698 found a meeting which pretended to be Quaker, founded by a person who had come up from the Virginia Colony. The heresy here was the "Jesus Christ is married to the whole world," that is, the Universalist doctrine that sinners as well as saints,



heathens as well as Christians, will be saved. Implicit was the attitude that Native Americans and Africans would be saved within the framework of their own traditional religious faiths. In the wilderness along the Potomac, in the slavery Colonies of Maryland and Virginia, it is unlikely that this implication was not drawn forth explicitly. The "John Perrot" heresy in Virginia, exhibiting "very unusual psychic traits," was also linked to witchcraft. The Quaker missionary worked vigorously in this region to wipe out the influence of this unauthorized and false prophet and meeting.<sup>26</sup>

Down in the Roanoke country on the south of the Dismal Swamp, where worshippers shouted and leaped in the meeting, and Native Americans had joined the meetings in 1672 and African Americans no later than 1698,<sup>27</sup> there was to be a different future for this 'quaker' worship than in the northern Colonies. In the eighteenth century, Long Island was settled with farms, the shores of the Potomac River with plantations, other wilderness areas cleared and well settled, while orthodox Quaker Pennsylvania flourished and became the fount of discipline, close at hand and continuous, for the Quakers of all Colonies. In most places along the east coast Anglo-Saxon society had become too pervasive and organized for easy, unhindered free meetings for spontaneous worship by Poor Whites, African Americans and persons of Native American descent. But between Virginia and North Carolina there was the Dismal Swamp, and when members of Roanoke society entered the Swamp around 1714 they surely took their quaker religious gatherings with them. Elsewhere in America the seventeenth century phenomenon that resulted from the meeting of Quaker freedom and the ethnic religions was suppressed by the conditions of society, dying out or going so far underground as to be unknown. But the Dismal Swamp was a place of refuge for ideas as well as persons. Here the quaker religious attitudes of the Roanoke community could continue unhampered by outside society, until they merged into the Spiritist religion of other maroons. In the maroon community African religion would have arrived and survived in any event, and interacted with the spiritual heritage of Native Americans and Poor Whites. But the prior development of the quaker meetings and their entry into the Swamp with Roanoke fugitives at the very beginning of a sizable maroon community must have had positive impact on easier and speedier cultural interchange between Black, white and Native American in matters spiritual.

There have been three great spiritual leaders who lived in or at the very edge of the Dismal-Swamp, persons renowned among their large and widespread clienteles, who based their spiritual gifts in part upon the Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center. The latest was Edgar Cayce, in

the mid-twentieth century. A century and a quarter earlier, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was Gamby Gholar. A century and a quarter before him, at the end of the ~~seventeenth century~~ there lived the first of the renowned spiritual figures of the Dismal Swamp, the conjure woman or sorceress Grace Sherwood, called a witch by her enemies of European culture. Her home was Lynnhaven, the seat of Princess Anne County in Virginia.<sup>28</sup> The little village lay against the eastern edge of the Dismal Swamp, on the very narrow shore between the Swamp and the Atlantic Ocean.

By the time of Grace Sherwood, English settlers had already given the Dismal Swamp region a name for witchcraft accusations. During the seventeenth century in Virginia there were fifteen witchcraft cases which reached the courts and whose records have survived. Twelve were identified as to location. One half were in the Dismal Swamp counties, Lower Norfolk and Princess Anne. One accusation in this region was made as early as 1655, so early in the history of Virginia that one must marvel that settlers had time for any interest except sheer physical survival.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the witchcraft accusations were expression of the very practical problem confronting Anglo-Saxon planters when they moved into a region already settled by fugitives from their kind of society, fugitives who were developing a rather different kind of culture. The County Court warned the population against loose and rash accusations,<sup>30</sup> yet in 1659 there were renewed allegations of witchcraft and this time fines were levied for slander.<sup>31</sup>

In 1675 the owner of an indentured servant accused the latter's wife of witchcraft;<sup>32</sup> though the 'lower orders' were more familiar with the old ways, planters could fear them. Social conflict should not be ruled out as a background for witchcraft hysteria in this region, with sorcery a weapon of the enslaved and witchcraft trials a weapon of the elite.

In 1678 there was another accusation,<sup>33</sup> and in 1698 a new cycle of cases began. A resident stated that he had been ridden like a horse from one house to another by neighbors, a husband and wife. They took him into court for slander, but lost. His defense was that he had merely described his experience, whether literal or dreamlike.<sup>34</sup> In another case the same couple were said to have ridden another man along the beach and back home again. The alleged witches lost their slander suit again, upon the same defense: he had only said that this had occurred to the best of his knowledge.<sup>35</sup> It was in this same year that Grace Sherwood first entered upon the public record. She and her husband entered suits for slander similar to those of the other couple. In one case a citizen stated that Mistress Sherwood had entered his house through the keyhole or a crack in the door, and had taken the shape of a black cat. In the other case a neighbor said that she had bewitched his cotton, causing



the crop to fail. The court, following its previous policy, dismissed the Sherwoods' cause for libel on the same grounds of defense: all that had been stated had been the experience of the events, whether real or fancied.<sup>36</sup> The legal counter-attack of those accused of witchcraft was not succeeding.

Eight years later Grace Sherwood was to be brought into court as defendant, charged as a witch. In the same decade two women were arrested on the same charge across the Dismal Swamp, in Currituck County, North Carolina. None of the three was convicted.<sup>37</sup>

The Dismal Swamp region had become the Salem of the South; not in the execution of convicted witches, but in the prevalence of marvels. So many entries concerning witchcraft in court record were distinctive of this region, as distinguished from other parts of Virginia and North Carolina and the adjoining Colonies.<sup>38</sup>

The great fame of Grace Sherwood began at her trial for witchcraft in 1706. Accusations must have continued, for now the Attorney General of Virginia entered criminal charges against her in the County Court. The Sheriff was ordered to search her house and elsewhere for suspicious objects, and a 'jury' of women was impaneled to make a search of her body for suspicious marks, signs of witchcraft according to current European belief. That the women selected refused may be an indication that Mistress Sherwood, conjure woman or no, had friends. In default of a body search, the State ordered another test:<sup>39</sup> ducking, a standard theological-legal practice in such cases. She was bound, then dropped into deep water, though with restraining ropes to rescue her. According to the belief, if she sank to the bottom she was normal, innocent of the charge. If she floated, face up, she was upheld by the Devil and a proven witch. She floated.<sup>40</sup> After this demonstration of her guilt it was possible to impanel another jury of women who were willing to conduct a body examination. They found two teat-like growths (pimples), damning signs in those days.<sup>41</sup>

Her fame, which remains considerable in the region,<sup>42</sup> was great on the day of the ducking test. Great crowds poured in from distant parts to see this rare event.<sup>43</sup> The report of the women's panel added to the buzz. And the outcome of the case could not have diminished the public fascination: the case was dismissed. The reason is now unknown: the County record is simply silent.<sup>44</sup> The silence suggests that the reason might hold considerable interest. Whatever it was, Mistress Sherwood was vindicated, she came forth from prison, her prestige much augmented. Eight years later she received 140 acres of land as a grant from Governor Spotswood, and she lived on as a resident of Lynnhaven for more than twenty-five years after her trial.<sup>45</sup>

✓ Grace Sherwood was African American. This was the tradition about her passed down for two centuries: she was a 'free' Black person.<sup>46</sup> In the 1890s however, the editor of her court cases reasoned that she was not; a member of the "despised free negro [*sic*] class" could not have been a land-owner, and the daughter of a "substantial mechanic."<sup>47</sup> The editor was probably reading his understanding of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries back into the seventeenth. More recent research and debates among historians have shown that the status of Black people and even the legal meaning of slavery are not clear for the seventeenth century. For example, at the time of Grace Sherwood's activity in Virginia, the Governor of the Bahamas was a Black man, and there were prominent African Americans in North Carolina, as already discussed in the present history.

The older tradition that Grace Sherwood was Black is supported by a statement in the criminal trial record. The report of the examination of her body states that the women's panel found "two Things like titts on her private parts of a Black Collier being Blacker yn [than] ye Rest of her Body . . ." <sup>48</sup> Unless the English language has changed more than indicated by the literature of that time, "a black color being blacker than the rest of her body" is a statement that the color of her skin was black. Unless new evidence is uncovered, her identification as African American handed down to 1895 also stands today.

There are places named for Grace Sherwood. Blossom Hill in Princess Anne County is noted for a flower elsewhere called blue lupine, but there called witchflower. According to legend, Grace Sherwood brought the first of these blossoms to Blossom Hill.<sup>49</sup> Also in Princess Anne County is the village of Witchduck, Virginia, the site of her trial by water.<sup>50</sup> Stories about Mistress Grace have been told in southeastern Virginia for eight generations.<sup>51</sup> On Knotts Island, Currituck County on the North Carolina side of the Dismal Swamp the tale was told two centuries after Grace Sherwood's time that the first rosemary bush in America was brought there by a witch.<sup>52</sup> The witch's name was forgotten on Knotts Island, but in the Virginia region of the Swamp it was Grace Sherwood who brought the first rosemary to this continent. Today tourists are told of Mistress Sherwood, and school children are taught about her, but she is identified as white, in accord with the 1895 surmise.<sup>53</sup>

The regional impact endured so long in written as well as oral form, and the legal record continued to arouse so much interest, that in the nineteenth century Grace Sherwood became known not as a Virginia witch, but as "*The Virginia Witch*." The nearest contender, in the western part of the State, created no such interest.<sup>54</sup>



Was Grace Sherwood, in culture as well as ancestry, a seventeenth century African American? Was she (and perhaps those lesser lights accused of witchcraft) a Dismal Swamp conjure woman, in African and perhaps Native American as well as European tradition? Most of the malevolent wonders which she and the others were accused of performing are of European province: witches' riding their victims (the nightmare), entrance to a house through crack or keyhole, assumption of the shape of a black cat, the blasting of crops. Mistress Grace is also said to have traveled over the sea in an eggshell, another European fancy. But then they were probably European minds who formulated the accusations, who gave form to whatever stimulus there was, strange words or gestures, strange sounds or lights from neighbor's cabin or grove, or a glance of the eye that startled and confused.

There are also hints of what may be Dismal Swamp culture in the folklore about Grace Sherwood. She is associated with ceremonial dancing ("where she danced the hills are barren").<sup>55</sup> The ceremonial dance is associated with European witchcraft, but much more with African (and Native American) religion and magic.

The Attorney General's instruction to the County Court included this order to the officers of the Court:

... Serch ye Sd [said] graces House & all Suspicious  
places Carfully for all Images and Such like  
things . . . <sup>56</sup>

The order to search all suspicious places as well as her house could indicate that she was thought to perform some of her ceremonies out of doors, as the legend of her dancing on the hills suggests. But the more interesting phrase is the order to search for images. The word could be used to mean merely the famous worldwide witches' dolls 'for sticking pins in' as imitative magic to harm a person (which is in no way particularly Haitian or African). But with the seventeenth and early eighteenth century English obsession with Protestant-Catholic antagonism, it is also reasonable to read the word image to mean a religious image, usage common for the Roman Catholic Saint's image so abhorred by Protestants as a superstitious, pagan device. Since there is no question of a charge of Catholicism against Grace Sherwood (nor of any Catholic 'problem' in the Dismal Swamp region), if the word be taken in its religious sense of that day, it suggests that Mistress Grace was suspected of possessing one or more 'heathen idols,' that one had been reported, or seized from another charged with witchcraft.<sup>57</sup> Carved wooden statues of the African Holy Spirits discovered in the Western

Hemisphere are most rare, but if they were found anywhere, the Dismal Swamp and its edge would be a likely place.

The positive indication that there were African (and likely Native American) elements in the spiritual world of Grace Sherwood is the testimony of legend that she was essentially a 'yarb 'ooman,' an herb doctor. It was Mistress Grace who brought the first blue lupine to the New World. It was also she who brought the first rosemary.<sup>58</sup> She could dance a hill bare of vegetation. She could blight a cotton field. In oral legend she is associated with vegetation and little else.

It is difficult to think of any aspect of culture that would be more immediately practical and useful than the merger of African, Native American and European peasant herb lore: the finding, identification, cultivation, knowledge of uses and effects, preparation and Administration of herbal remedies, both medicinal and magical, the beginning of that all-American tradition of home remedies and patent medicines, still triumphant in every American inner-city chain drug store. The contemporary pharmacopoeia of orthodox medicine in the West is famous for its reliance upon 'folk' remedies from the 'pre-scientific' peoples of the world. What professional excitement there must have been when African, Native American and British peasant first put their heads together for the cure of disease! And where better than at the Great Dismal Swamp, where the variety of plant life was enormous, persons of the three cultures present in considerable number, and mutual trust available to a most unusual degree?

The lupine flower, in its occult use, was associated with the brightening of the mind and the quickening of the imagination. Both mystic and cynic in opposite mood would agree that it did its work well for the people of the Dismal Swamp. In its natural use, lupine in the old world was cultivated for food, and considered a most wholesome one, quite edible even when eaten dry.<sup>59</sup> It was a cereal substitute. If the maroons, and the poor around the Swamp, knew or learned this use of the plant (and need is the mother of discovery), they must have blessed the name of Grace Sherwood when she was credited with bringing this plant to the country.

Mistress Grace is said to have brought the rosemary plant to America from England, flying there and back in a moment in her eggshell.<sup>60</sup> The mention of England is of course the English settler's rejoicing to see a familiar and beloved plant of home in a strange and desolate land. The African variant would be that she swam home to Guinea beneath the seas and brought back the holy herb. Geographically the latter would be more accurate. Rosemary grows uneasily in England, but is at home on warmer coasts, the Tidewater South, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and coastal Africa.<sup>61</sup>



Shakespeare's "rosemary for remembrance" is a part of a literary and courtly 'language of the flowers,' not a symbol in folklore.<sup>62</sup> In its natural use rosemary was used as a spice in cooking, brewed as a tea supposed to revive and relax the mind and spirit,<sup>63</sup> and when burned was thought to ward off pestilence. Hence it was burned in sickrooms, worn at funerals, and planted in cemeteries.<sup>64</sup> When epidemics of yellow fever struck the Norfolk slums in 1776, 1795, 1802, 1821 and 1855 Mistress Grace's plant gave comfort if not cure.<sup>65</sup>

But the occult meaning of rosemary holds the most interest for an understanding of Grace Sherwood. It was overwhelmingly and most explicitly the herb of herbs to ward off witches! So much for Grace Sherwood's being a witch, in the estimation of her own people. In Spain rosemary was worn against the evil eye. In the Near East it was hung in the home or used in magical ceremonies to frustrate supernatural evil, and identified with the hyssop of the Bible. It was used for the safeguarding of homes from the curse of the Death Angel during the first Passover (Exodus 12:22) and is a symbol in the famous moral allusion in the Fifty-first Psalm, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"<sup>66</sup> Rosemary has a powerful history.

In the plant folklore compendia consulted, seven lands are mentioned by name in which rosemary was highly esteemed as a guardian against witchcraft: The Near East, Italy, Sicily, Spain, Portugal, Jamaica and Alabama. All except the first two have had strong and well known historical influences from Africa, and those two have also had their African connections. In both Portugal and Sicily, the two most African of European lands, rosemary is the "elf" plant, that is, the plant associated with non malignant spirits of the fields. In Sicily these field spirits are seen as taking the form of snakes (still non-malignant) who find themselves a rosemary plant and curl up beneath it (sure proof that they cannot be diabolic, though serpents).<sup>67</sup> The snake as a spiritual symbol, not Satanic, is extremely un-European. Though the evidence is too fragmentary to draw a conclusion, it is interesting to find rosemary and a serpent legend or 'cult' so close together, in Afro-Italian Sicily and Afro-American Virginia. But the other information is not so fragmentary: in the folklore of rosemary, countries of African background predominate. And America's Lady of the Rosemary was African in descent. It appears she was African in other respects as well. The point is not that the uses of Rosemary could not have been introduced to America by European herbals, but that this particular herb, Grace Sherwood's special symbol, is so African.

In the exhaustive list of the lore of animals and plants collected by the American Folk-Lore Society, there is only one item on rosemary: "A sprig of rosemary brings good luck and prevents witchcraft." The

source is Alabama.<sup>68</sup> And in a published collections of notes on Jamaican "ethnobotany" the statement on rosemary is that the plant is burned to drive away "duppies" or evil spirits, or sprigs are rubbed over the body or scattered about the house for the same purpose. A significant note is added: "White people also use it."<sup>69</sup> Jamaica, Alabama, the upper South centering on the Dismal Swamp, the afterthought "white people also use it," and Grace Sherwood are linked by sprigs of rosemary in a pattern that is African American.

The tenacious rosemary legend of Virginia and North Carolina does not appear to be of European origin. Neither England nor any other northern European nation is mentioned as prominent in the old world folklore of rosemary, and there were no Italian, Sicilian, Spanish or Portuguese communities in the English Colonies of the South. It may also be concluded from her most famous symbol, the rosemary, that Grace Sherwood's herbal and occult work in general was African American, of African as well as British and probably Native American origins. The symbolism and history of rosemary in the Old World and the New are of no importance to this study. What they lead to is important: The Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center under the aegis of Grace Sherwood, its first great occult leader, was an expression of African American culture in the intense and tenacious interaction with other peoples so characteristic of the Dismal Swamp region.

Another conclusion from the symbolism of rosemary is that Grace Sherwood was not a witch, neither in the European meaning nor in the tradition of malignant sorcery. The meaning of rosemary forbids her having been a worker of evil magic of any kind. She was the opposite, a sorceress who worked benign magic. Clearly from that West African tradition she was one of the first if not the first, and one of the greatest, of the African American conjure women and conjure men, readers and advisors, so prominent in the history of African American culture. Associated in the minds of her people with the lupine, free food for the poor, and the rosemary, safeguard against fears of the supernatural, her work was not to cross but to uncross, not to harm but to ward off harm, not to hurt but to heal, not frighten but to reassure.

One more thing must be said of Grace Sherwood: a great conjure woman and herb doctor in her lifetime, she became a nature spirit after her death. In still living legend the bringer of blue lupine and rosemary to an entire continent, the denier of vegetation to those hills she desires to be forever bare, She is now a Spirit of Vegetation. To persons with minds of European bent She is a Mother Nature of their Southland, metaphorically, but psychologically valid.<sup>70</sup> To minds able to personify forces of nature and values of human living more fully and personally, She has been a patron saint, a Holy Spirit in Her particular sphere of



activity. The religious process of the devotee of a Holy Spirit becoming a Holy Spirit after death, to be venerated by popular as well as hierarchical canonization, is highly characteristic of West African traditional societies. For example, if an herb doctor of a Yoruba city state venerates Nana Bouclou, the Patron Lady Spirit of herb lore, and is so blessed by this Spirit during her life that she is of extraordinary help to the people and extraordinarily revered by them, then upon her death the herb doctor becomes a member of the pantheon of Holy Spirits. She is now the Nana Bouclou of that particular city state, or She is the Nana Bouclou of certain plants or processes of growth. She takes over the attributes of the ancient Spirit, but under Her own name.<sup>71</sup> Something like this is what happened to Grace Sherwood during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is still happening concealed in the tourist trade and curriculum materials for the children of the public schools.

Mistress Grace Sherwood, of the farm on Muddy Creek, Corotuck Bay, Lynnhaven Parish, Princess Anne County, Virginia, is the most distinguished member of the first American-born Black generation whose history is now known from the present study. She is also the earliest known person to be canonized by popular consensus as a Saint of the African American people. It is not surprising that her special work in life was with matters spiritual. For her house and farm were surrounded by a branch of the Dismal Swamp;<sup>72</sup> the main body of the Great Swamp was only a few hundred yards away; she was a Dismal Swamp woman.

After the death of Grace Sherwood in 1731 until the end of the Century there was no Dismal Swamp spiritual leader or specific concentrated activity of which details have survived. It was during this period that the new maroon community was forming, and with the increase of Black population on the plantations becoming predominantly African American. This was the time when African religious and occult culture entered into maroon institutions and the legends of the Swamp interior, though neither would reach full development until the next century. The name of one sorceress of the deep Swamp comes down without the date when she flourished, Big Ditch Maria; others are even more shadowy, neither name nor time remembered, some whose occult work centered upon Native American tradition, some of African heritage called conjure men, some still called witches by Anglo-Saxons around the Swamp.<sup>73</sup> In Grace Sherwood's time, the latter seventeenth and early eighteenth century, there had been more alleged witchcraft around the Dismal Swamp than elsewhere in the South; now it was the interior of the Swamp which bore the reputation

of an exceptionally active center of sorcery and other supernatural manifestations.

William Byrd II's venture into the Swamp in 1728, the first to be reported by an outsider, was striking for the accidentally but completely representative character of the maroons he met. The two families and an individual whom he encountered at different points were a cross section of maroon society as that society appears throughout its history. One family was African American; Byrd did not doubt that they were escaped slaves.<sup>74</sup> The other family is not described as Black, but Byrd did not hesitate to call them maroons, meaning fugitives in hiding. The husband called himself a "hermit," philosophically or religiously motivated (some quaker-like 'heresy'?); he gathered oysters. His wife hunted, caught, and milked cows of the nearest plantations.<sup>75</sup> They were a variant, and a mild one if their story to Byrd was complete, of the tawny Scratch Hall or Poor White maroon.

Byrd's third encounter occurred in the midst of a large and convoluted stretch of water surrounded by the Swamp. The surveying party was in a boat, desperately trying to decide which surrounding vista of reeds and bush was towards Princess Anne County, their goal. At last in the great loneliness another boat appeared, with a single figure in it. This denizen of the Swamp guided them toward their destination. He was a fortune-teller or soothsayer by profession. However scattered the population of the Swamp, they provided him with a living.<sup>76</sup> Judging from their predilections, he probably received some clients from neighborhoods outside the Swamp as well.

Black maroons, other maroons, and a sorcerer: William Byrd's encounters were an epitome of Dismal Swamp social history.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), pp. 5, 107–8; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 214; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 212–13, 247, 287; also see Chapter 9, note 18.



<sup>2</sup> Hubert J. Davis, *The Great Dismal Swamp* (Richmond: Cavalier Press, 1962), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44. A likely source for such map information is the sixteenth century Spanish Catholic mission which was located in "Virginia" near the Dismal Swamp, an outpost of Spanish Florida.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Arnold, *The Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond* (Norfolk: n.p., 1888), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 161-63.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> Arnold, *Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond*, p. 76; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 181.

<sup>10</sup> Edmund Ruffin, "Observations Made During an Excursion to the Dismal Swamp," *Farmers' Register* 4 (1837): 515.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold, *Dismal Swamp and Lake Drummond*, pp. 43-44, 76.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44, 76.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 36, 157.

<sup>16</sup> "De Graffenried's Manuscript," in William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: Trustees of the Public Libraries, 1886-1890), vol. 1, pp. 982-83 (hereafter cited as CRNC), Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 157.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Hunter, "The Great Dismal Swamp," *Outing* (1895): 73.

<sup>18</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>19</sup> S.M. Ellis, *The Solitary Horseman or the Life and Adventures of G.P.R. James* (Kensington: The Cayne Press, 1927), p. 170. Like all other works cited in this study unless identified as fictional, this work is non-fiction, including non-fictional reports of Dismal Swamp folklore. James is an historic person, and the book a kind of biography.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Davis, *Great Dismal Swamp*, p. 157; Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 218.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 3, notes 22-25.

<sup>23</sup> George Fox, *Journal*, John L. Nickalls, ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952, rev. ed.), p. 647.

<sup>24</sup> William Edmundson, *A Journal of the Life*, 2d ed. (London: Mary Hinde, 1774), p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Random body spasm under religious excitement, a universal phenomenon, must be distinguished from motor reactions which take the form of dance steps ("shouting" in present-day ecstatic black churches), especially when the latter are done by a number of worshippers, the Holy Dance. The Holy Dance of the Shakers was not brought to America from Europe nor had their French prophet predecessors practiced it, but was introduced after their contact with the American frontier in the South and Midwest. Edward D. Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications, 1940), pp. 143-47.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Story, *A Journal of the Life* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: n.p., 1747), p. 168; Rufus Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp. 276, 280.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58; Fox, *Journal*, p. 644.

<sup>28</sup> *They named It Princess Anne* (n.p.: Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce, n.d.), mimeographed, n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Beale Davis, "The Devil in Virginia in the Seventeenth Century," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (April 1957): 138-48; Benjamin Dey White, *Gleanings in the History of Princess Anne County* (n.p.: n.p., 1924), pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Lower Norfolk County Court Record, in *The Lower Norfolk County, Virginia, Antiquary* (New York: Peter Smith, reprinted 1951), vol. 3, no. 4 (1895), p. 152.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1895), p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1895), pp. 48, 50, 50n.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1895), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Ibid.*, vol. 1; no. 1, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1895), pp. 89, 92-93.

<sup>37</sup> Jesse Forbes Pugh, *Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N.C.: n.p., 1957), p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> White, *Gleanings*, p. 12; Rogers Dey Whichard, *The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1959), vol. 2, p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1895), pp. 35-36; "Record of Grace Sherwood's Trial for Witchcraft in 1705, in Princess Anne County, Virginia. Presented by President Cushing . . . on the Fourth of February, 1833," in Virginia



Historical and Philosophical Society, *Collections* (Richmond: n.p., 1833), vol. 1, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1895), p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Virginia Historical Society article, 1833 (footnote 39); reprint of court record, 1895 (note 34, etc.); reprint of court record, 1895, in *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 3 (1895), reprint 1951 (note 34, etc.); interviews with Virginia Beach (former Princess Anne County) Chamber of Commerce telephone receptionists, 1972, 1974; interviews with President M. Smith of Princess Anne Historical Society and Princess Anne local historian Mrs. Louisa Kyle, 1972. See also below, notes 49–54.

<sup>43</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1895), p. 52n.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55n, 56.

<sup>46</sup> For example, "Record of Grace Sherwood's Trial," in Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society, *Collections* 1 (1833): 78.

<sup>47</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary* vol. 2, no. 3 (1895), p. 89n.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1895), p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary* vol. 3, no. 2 (1895), p. 52n.

<sup>51</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>52</sup> H.B. Ansell, "Recollections of a Lifetime, Knotts Island, Currituck County, North Carolina," Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library, p. 102. The Library has catalogued this manuscript as volume one of Ansell manuscripts.

<sup>53</sup> Interviews, President H. Smith of Princess Anne Historical Society and Princess Anne local historian Mrs. Louisa Kyle, 1972. Also, Louisa Venabel Kyle, *Virginia Beach History* (n.p.: Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce, n.d.), mimeographed. In 1963 Virginia Beach City annexed all of Princess Anne County, thus obliterating the county in accord with Virginia's policy of county jurisdictions' not extending into cities.

<sup>54</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1895), p. 20 and *passim*; "Record of Grace Sherwood's Trial," p. 77.

<sup>55</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 60; interview with Mrs. Kyle.

<sup>56</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1895), p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2; pp. 56, 58. This regional historian characterizes the image as "superstitious," which seems to reflect his association of the word image with idol rather than a doll to injure, and he uses the phrase "Old Religion" for Grace Sherwood's activities, a suggestion of "paganism" rather than the more common understanding of witchcraft as the malign sorcerer's vocation.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Folkard, *Plant Lore, Legends and Lyrics* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884), pp. 422-23.

<sup>60</sup> Whichard, *Lower Tidewater Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 60.

<sup>61</sup> Folkard, *Plant Lore* pp. 525-26; Hildreic Friend, *Flowers and Flower Lore* (London: W. Swann Sonnenschein and Co., 2d ed., 1884), pp. 37, 542; Fanny D. Bergen, ed., *Animal and Plant Lore*, *Memoirs of American Folk-Lore Society* 7 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1899), p. 102; Martha Beckwith, ed., *Notes on Jamaican Ethnobotany* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Vassar College, 1927), p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Folkard, *Plant Lore*, p. 526.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525; Friend, *Flowers and Flower Lore*, p. 379.

<sup>65</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, pp. 188-89.

<sup>66</sup> Friend, *Flowers and Flower Lore*, pp. 542-43; Bergen, *Animal and Plant Lore*, p. 102; Beckwith, *Jamaican Ethnobotany*, p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> Folkard, *Plant Lore*, p. 526.

<sup>68</sup> Bergen, *Animal and Plant Lore*, p. 102.

<sup>69</sup> Beckwith, *Jamaican Ethnobotany*, p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> See above, notes 49, 52, 55.

<sup>71</sup> Idowu, *Olodumare*, pp. 69, 92-24.

<sup>72</sup> Princess Anne County Court Record, *Lower Norfolk County Antiquary*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1895), p. 55n.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, *Tales from Old Carolina*, p. 199.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 8, note 24.

<sup>75</sup> William Byrd, *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), pp. 47, 49.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.



## Chapter 14

### The Seven-Finger High Glister and the Sleeping Prophet: The Transmission of Dismal Swamp Spiritism

Following the American Revolution, in the 1790s and first decade of the nineteenth century, there were strenuous efforts by the enslaved people of plantation and town and the Dismal Swamp maroons to wage a unified war against slavery and to extend communications between regions of the South, particularly the Dismal Swamp maroons to wage a unified war against slavery and to extend communications between regions of the South, particularly the Dismal Swamp region and the Virginia Piedmont region around Richmond. As recounted, about 1810 the maroons, under the leadership of Peter II, together with slave insurrectionists, sought to establish a communications and planning network for the war against slavery through the spiritual leaders of the plantation Black communities, the preachers of the underground religious faith of the slave quarters, and the conjure men and conjure women.<sup>1</sup>

It was during this period that the Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center of the upper South entered upon a new and more developed stage. Out of the background of early Native American esteem of the Dismal Swamp as a sacred place, and the seventeenth century exceptional prevalence of so-called witches around the Swamp, Grace Sherwood and her people's devotion to her had intensified and sharpened the spiritual impact of the Swamp and its region. During the remainder of the eighteenth century while conjure men and women joined the maroon community in the Swamp, the burgeoning African American culture created Spiritist religious institutions, worship and sacred lore, under the favorable Swamp conditions of security and self-determination.

Now, near the beginning of the nineteenth, and to last for decades, quite likely to the end of maroon history, there was formed in the Dismal Swamp maroon community a highly organized and official central council for the direction of underground Spiritist activities in the States of Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

The council consisted of seven aged and revered spiritual leaders, "Seven-Finger High-Glisters," collectively called "The Head," a head with seven minds. The members of The Head served terms of fourteen years. They were chosen from the higher order of conjure men and women (and perhaps priests) of plantation, town, and maroon community. The Head met in permanent session,<sup>3</sup> and it was required that those selected from elsewhere relocate in the Swamp. If a high conjuror chosen for membership in The Head was a slave, it would be necessary for him to escape, undoubtedly with the personalized assistance of maroon guerrillas.

The primary duty of The Head was the reordination of the conjure men and women of the upper South at the expiration of their seventh year of service. Without that ceremony their powers lapsed.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting in this connection that the term of office of the Kings of the Yoruba city states was seven years. Perhaps 'free' conjure men and women made their way into the Swamp for reordination, and this would have also been possible for some of those plantation spiritual leaders who chose to remain slaves in order to continue their community function; temporary escapes were very common in the South, but the members of The Head, individually, also made stealthy journeys outside the Swamp to reordain those of the brethren who were slaves and could not get away.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that these difficult and dangerous contacts were made without seizing the opportunity for consultation, reports and direction.

The second ceremonial duty of The Head was advancement of ordinary community spiritual leaders, the "Two-Headed" men and women, to the higher grade of "Seven-Finger High-Glister."<sup>6</sup> Other duties of The Head were the performance of spiritual works beyond the power of any single practitioner, and the conduct of ceremonies at the central temple in the Dismal Swamp for the preservation and advancement of the African American people, in particular towards the abolition of slavery.<sup>7</sup> The permanent session of the Head in the Swamp permitted regular and frequent group ceremonials towards these ends. The social impact must have been tremendous: Knowledge that such a council existed and was perpetually engaged in such ceremonies could only have been of inestimable value in the preservation of hope and the encouragement of struggle for those African Americans in bondage who believed.



Above all else, except professional help to individuals with problems, The Head, like the conjure persons of the plantations, considered themselves to be the chaplains corps of the war on slavery. The Head deeply revered the memory of Nat Turner, and claimed to have been associated with his effort. As young conjure men they had fought alongside General Gabriel and took pride in that action forty years later.<sup>8</sup> The morale-building blessing of slave insurrections by priests and conjure persons which began with the beginning of American slavery, and the design of a spiritual network for social liberation associated with Peter II, were laying a foundation of radical community responsibility by spiritual leaders upon which elements of the Black Christian ministry were later to build.

At this time African American Methodist and Baptist ministers and churches of the 'free' Black community, quite separately from African Spiritism, maintained their own channels for community service, including support for slave insurrections, most notably in the Denmark Vesey Insurrection at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822. It is a moot question how much priests of the old religion or underground plantation preachers placed themselves in the jurisdiction of The Head along with conjure men and conjure women. Plantation preachers who incorporated the veneration of the Holy spirits, as angels or saints, along with the Christian faith, and who felt themselves to be Christian ministers, if of a special kind, may have abstained from official relations with the Head. But when such distinctions were less clear, or when the religious leader of a plantation was also the conjure person, The Head and its organization in the upper South would have been looked to for leadership and mutual support. Persons who performed the office of priest as well as that of conjure person must have been included among the spiritual leaders who were the constituency of The Head.

The chief member of The Head in the 1840s or 1850s and for some twenty or thirty years before was named Gamby Gholar. The second most revered member bore the name Maudy Ghamus.<sup>9</sup> The names Gholar and Ghamus are of similar construction, and are difficult to identify as to national origin. They do not seem to be forms or derivations or English or other European names, and have no Native American flavor. Nor is their construction reminiscent of Yoruba, Dahomean or Akan names encountered in the Western Hemisphere, or of Bantu word structure. Perhaps they are transliterations of one of the less familiar African languages. The family name Gholar does exist in the African American community, and with the same spelling.<sup>10</sup>

Materials and technique recorded for the bestowal of a blessing by The Head were of a kind familiar in African American and other sorcery. For the particular client and purpose of the blessing, selection was made

from a store of such substances as woolen yarn, onion skins, oyster shells, finger and toe nails, egg shells, serpent scales, iron nails and "the charm bone of a tree frog." The items selected, mixed and sealed in a gourd, were called by The Head a "goombah"; to bestow the blessing the conjure man shook the goombah and chanted an incantation before the client. Beside this kind of process, The Head was also involved in herb medicine, making particular use of two plants which they called "fongosa" and "mocasa." The Head possessed a "bluestone," a rare magical device, which they used in the selecting of items for the goombah. The bluestone resembled a lump of darkly tinted glass; members of The Head gazed through it to discern the spiritual meaning of material objects.<sup>11</sup>

The temple of The Head was a cave, not likely a stone cave in that swampy land, but perhaps a roofed dugout on one of the islands. Here the Head held consultations, stored its supplies, performed its rituals, and housed its most sacred spiritual symbol.<sup>12</sup> This chief symbol of the spiritual power they invoked is more significant than the details of their magical work recounted, for the light it casts upon the religion held at this spiritual center. And it does establish that there was a religious as well as a magical dimension to this place and organization.

The symbol of The Head was the serpent. A large but harmless and domesticated snake shared the temple cave with the seers, and was the primary object of the awe of their colleagues and clients.<sup>13</sup> In West Africa (and indeed throughout Africa ancient and modern) the serpent has been such a widespread and leading holy object that the symbol has sometimes been selected to represent the religion of African Spiritism,<sup>14</sup> as the crescent for Islam, or the six-pointed star for Judaism. The totally opposite meanings of the snake symbol, for Africa and eastern Asia where it represents benevolent spiritual help, and for Europe and western Asia where it represents the devil, have historically different roots; there is a problem of understanding only when persons from the former and latter regions come to live side by side. The Holy African Spirit symbolized by the serpent is the Spirit of Vitality, the vitality of nature, and the renewal of human energy. He is one of the principal Holy Spirits among many West African peoples. The Yorubas call Him by their word for Serpent, Dan. He is an even more important Holy Spirit called Camballa in Dahomey, where Spiritism is the most highly organized in Africa. Damballa is also revered in lands of the Western Hemisphere; He is the paramount Holy Spirit of Haiti. Called The Angel Dannie He was the Patron Spirit of New Orleans. Thus Damballa was the principal Holy Spirit venerated in the two known African spiritual centers within the United States, New Orleans and its bayous, and the Dismal Swamp.<sup>15</sup>



The importance attached to the serpent Spirit by The Head clarifies the significance of the sacred serpents associated in Dismal Swamp legend with the grassy waste called Paradise Old Field. And it identifies the Holy Lord and Lady Spirits Who ascended from the ground at that holy place. Like the supernatural King of the Dismal Swamp, the West African serpent Spirit is always accompanied by His consort. She is called Aido by the Yorubas. Her symbol is a small green snake.<sup>16</sup> Like the Dismal Swamp Lord and Lady who rose from the ground, Their realm beneath, the serpent Lord and Lady of Africa are othonic Spirits, Spirits of the deep earth. Pools are the particular places sacred to these two West African Spirits,<sup>17</sup> and in Dismal Swamp legend there were grottoes and channels from Lake Drummond under the Field from which the Lord and Lady arose. The Holy Lord and Lady Spirits of Paradise Old Field Who ascended from watery caves of sacred serpents, and the spiritual Power most venerated by The Head, were the same, the West African Holy Spirits Damballa and Aido.

In West Africa, Haiti and Brazil, African places of worship consist of a very small temple building for sacred objects and the private administrations of the priest, and a large adjoining dancing ground for congregational worship.<sup>18</sup> It would not then be unlikely that the temple cave of The Head adjoined Paradise Old Field, the most holy place of the holy Swamp, where the maroon community gathered to honor in the holy dance their Patron Spirits, arisen and manifest in human flesh.

When did The Head dissolve? It was flourishing, and an organization of great prestige in the 1840s and probably in the 1850s; there is therefore no reason to think it ended before the general end of the maroon community after the Civil War. In after years former maroons and others may well have entered the Dismal Swamp to perform ceremonies on that ancient holy ground. But continued communities, even the small monastic community of The Head, are unlikely.

The Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center of the upper South by no means ended with the Civil War. As spiritual leaders had moved from the surrounding region into the Swamp during the eighteenth century, such persons now in the latter nineteenth century moved out of the Swamp back into the neighborhoods around the Swamp. One conjure man of the Dismal Swamp region whose career bridged the period was Lorenza Smallwood, of African and Native American descent. He had begun his studies as a slave; after the War he became a successful farmer and a conjure man of the higher order. His fame centered upon his reported victory over a much feared witch; though she was a shape-changer, he destroyed her. In the 1870s the most renowned of conjure women was Clarendia Cartwright, whose home and consulting parlors

were at Moyock,<sup>19</sup> Currituck County, North Carolina, a place as close in to the Dismal Swamp as any known village can be, surrounded by the estuaries of the Swamp. There were daily "loads" of clients who came in to consult the seer. On weekends or holidays the road from Virginia was crowded with the carts of those coming to see Madam Cartwright.<sup>20</sup> She was a Cuffey, an outstanding Dismal Swamp clan of conjure men and conjure women. "Old Man Cuffey," a late contemporary or successor of Gamby Gholar and Maudy Ghamus, had maintained his headquarters at a place in Virginia called Blackwater (the name shows that it was at the Swamp), and was considered the greatest of the Cuffeys. He ministered to the needs of persons in Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties in Virginia and in Currituck County and probably other counties, according to the report,<sup>21</sup> in the Dismal Swamp region of North Carolina—a traveling conjure man like the one encountered by William Byrd II a century and a quarter before. Old Cuffey's successor Madame Clarendia was eventually "driven off" from Moyock by hostile elements of the population, and relocated her practice at Berkeley, Virginia, which was later incorporated into South Norfolk.<sup>22</sup> The changes of location from one state to another may indicate that the presence of the Virginia-North Carolina boundary at the Swamp was still useful for the eluding of pursuit.

The Cuffeys were African American, but even in the post-Civil War period the old cultural links between Black and white at the Dismal Swamp had not broken down; much of their clientele was white (the observer of their work says most). In the twentieth century the Dismal Swamp continued to be a spiritual center of the upper South, and its new manifestations can be shown to have the same old African American and poor white rootage (and probably Native American), but now the spiritual leaders would be white, and not members of the Poor White caste. The parallel may be very close to the history of jazz. No student doubts that the origin of jazz was African American; its early greats were Black; but in the 1920s and after white jazz artists took the center of the stage in the American or majority entertainment world.

In some year between 1898 and 1906 two small white boys, E.W. Burroughs and Henry Stone, spending the night in an old house at a place called Sigma in Princess Anne County,<sup>23</sup> Virginia, reported that pillows and other objects floated up into the air or hurled themselves against the walls without apparent natural cause. As the children grew up they are said to have continued to observe these phenomena and to have heard loud rapping sounds of unknown origin whenever they were together in the house. In adulthood according to reps the uncanny events invariably occurred when they met, and witnesses were invited to the house, who solemnly affirmed that they had observed the activity.



Eventually the phenomena followed the two away from the house, and occurred in Norfolk and elsewhere. There were newspaper reports, and for several decades the events maintained considerable fame in the region and in circles interested in psychic research elsewhere in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

This reported self-levitation and propulsion of objects, and rapping sounds of unknown origin, associated with particular houses, and often with particular people, are called poltergeist activities in the circles of mediumistic spiritualism and psychic research. These circles, the one a movement to communicate with the dead, which began in the mid-nineteenth century in Anglo-Saxon America in the North, the other an effort to submit alleged supernatural phenomena to laboratory conditions, have little or nothing to do with folklore, old traditions handed down, and little or nothing to do with conjure men and women, Holy Spirits in the sense of saints and angels, African-Native American-Poor White culture, Southern folk, culture, or the heritage of the Dismal Swamp.

Not the form of the Burroughs-Stone manifestations but their context places them in the cultural tradition of the maroons and in the long history of the Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center of the upper South. The old house at Sigma was within a few miles at most from the site of Grace Sherwood's home, and the edge of the Dismal Swamp. And the house already had some kind of a reputation for the uncanny before the first experience reported by the children.<sup>25</sup> Persons of the region who were hostile to the continuing efforts of Burroughs and Stone called them "witchcraft," and the two men and their associates, though not interested in sorcery or evil spirits, agreed that the phenomena, whatever they were, were the kind of manifestations once generally called witchcraft.<sup>26</sup>

Just as significant as the folk tradition in placing these events in this history is the way in which they were conceptualized by the participants. The local folk who were interested, including the two protagonists, did not consider the house at Sigma to be haunted, or the phenomena to be caused by any ghost, the lingering soul of some dead person. These concepts, the ghost, and the particular place haunted by a ghost, belong to many cultures, but they are highly characteristic of European folklore and in no way distinctive to African or Native American lore. These were ruled out by the persons active in the Sigma manifestations. What they turned to instead for an explanation is very close to the concept of a Holy Spirit, a supernatural Power much greater than man but subordinate to God, which is a concept much more characteristic of African and Native American culture than of European.

Burroughs, Stone and friends believed the events to be caused by what they called "The Invisible Force," not in the sense of any universal force, but a supernatural power residing at that particular neighborhood. In their thinking, The Invisible Force may once have lived in human form, but if so, he or she was a being of mysterious powers even when in the flesh, and in the invisible state was merely a continuation of what had been originally just as strange and amazing a power. The power continued because it was a power, not because one human being had died tragically and was not venting its spite or unhappiness. As an alternative theory they believed The Invisible Force may never had been incarnate, but a force of nature peculiar to the locale.<sup>27</sup> On one hand their rejection of a ghost theory removes the Sigma experiences from Mediumistic Spiritualism; on the other hand their emphasis on the locality is at odds with the main thrust of mystical religions and philosophies of universal being such as Hinduism and New Thought. But what Burroughs, Stone and associates perceived is quite similar to the African and Native American (and British peasant) belief in mighty and invisible Spirits of nature, and the particularly African belief that human beings of extraordinary spiritual power may at their death become one of this hierarchy of powerful Spirits.

To seal the fact that the actors in the Sigma events considered themselves to be the current movers in an ancient spiritual heritage of the Dismal Swamp are their statements that The Invisible Force had manifested itself in the vicinity one hundred years before<sup>28</sup> (the era of The Head) and that Princess Anne County was "the county where spirits have walked since time immemorial."<sup>29</sup> They knew their local history.

Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), the latest of the Dismal Swamp seers, receives extensive consideration here because his youthful nurture in matters mystical was Southern in general and African American in particular, and the location of his work at the Dismal Swamp was a deliberate decision explained by him in spiritual terms. His public fame however is as a psychic. In the United States he is by far the most widely known of persons believed to be sensitive to supernatural forces.<sup>30</sup> More books have been read about him than all other twentieth century psychics put together. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions know his name who would have difficulty recalling the name of any other psychic, recent or ancient, American or foreign. Cayce, a white Southerner, came of a family deeply immersed in the Southern tradition of occult or spiritual beliefs and practices. For years Cayce was prompted by his 'voices' to establish himself at Virginia Beach, Virginia, which is on the edge of Dismal Swamp. He reported that he was told that this was the most favorable location for the spiritual



power he had experienced to communicate. When at last he followed this repeated advice and moved to Virginia Beach, within sign of the Dismal Swamp, it was from there that his influence became nationwide.

Edgar Cayce entered professional practice as a seer in 1901.<sup>31</sup> The method and purpose remained essentially the same throughout his life. In a hypnotic trance, his voice analyzed the problems of his clients, and prescribed the remedy. According to the seer, the messages were not his, but from an omniscient supernatural power which used his voice; the nature of this spiritual force was never precisely defined. Most of his "readings" concerned health problems; he left the application of the remedies prescribed to physicians, unless they were home remedies, changes of diet, and other such prescriptions not requiring drugs, surgery or medical equipment. Sometimes the readings concerned the location of natural resources and business trends, or the analysis of personal problems; sometimes they were information helpful in the philosophic or religious growth of the client. It is estimated that he delivered some 16,000 readings during his career.<sup>32</sup> The nucleus of his following were those who felt that his medical diagnosis and prescribed remedy had been right for them.

During most of Cayce's career his psychic work was often only supplementary to his vocation of commercial photography; his readings were subject to harassment by the police on the charges of fortune telling or spiritualist mediumship; and though he received considerable local publicity from place to place and some nationally,<sup>33</sup> his clients and other admirers were unorganized and without continuing access to his work and the thought in his readings. In no sense did he enjoy national fame.

It was in the last years of his life, during the 1930s and early 1940s, and especially since his death, that the fame of his work became so widespread and the content of his readings so influential. An organization, the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) was formed, focusing on the indexing, analysis and study of the 14,249 readings that were transcribed and have survived (most three to four pages, typed single-spaced).<sup>34</sup> The A.R.E. has 16,000 members, besides others who belong to the 1200 study groups which it sponsors. Many books, at least a dozen considered of major importance by Cayce's followers, have been published in hardcover and paperback,<sup>35</sup> biographies, studies of specialized aspects of his readings, and philosophical analyses of his work, most of them repeatedly re-issued and selling hundreds of thousands of copies. They are published by standard commercial publishers and distributed nationally through general book stores and the paperback or magazine counters of drug

stores, supermarkets, airports, bus stations and similar outlets. This national fame of Edgar Cayce was established before the rise of national interest in the occult in the late 1960s and has held its own amid the new competition of similar interests.

At Cayce's old headquarters by the Dismal Swamp the sizable staff of the A.R.E. administers and leads; there is a steady flow of pilgrims to conferences, institutes and classes.<sup>36</sup> The philosophic interests of A.R.E. are eclectic in the realms of psychic phenomena, the occult and mysticism. The attitude is non-dogmatic, encouraging alternative interpretations of phenomena. There are efforts to discourage psychic practices among followers which are of potential psychiatric danger, and one-sided compulsive-like pursuit of such often over-seductive concerns as astrology, visitors from outer space, sorcery, secret doctrines, and secret brotherhoods.

With the majority of persons pursuing their interest in the work of Cayce through the reading of books rather than contact with the A.R.E., the organization does not seem to be in direct competition with the older movements interested in psychic phenomena, such as the New Thought churches (Unity and others), the Theosophical Society, and Mediumistic Spiritualism. Instead the work of Cayce is interesting to members of those older movements. The subjects emphasized in Cayce's readings and of interest to his followers today are generally those that have been of concern to the twentieth century American (Anglo-Saxon) style of mysticism and the occult, but usually with a de-emphasis of the more exotic or trivial. These subjects include extra-sensory perception, spiritual meditation, psychic attitudes in physical health, psychic attitudes in mental health, the relation of psychic and psychoanalytic theory, the spiritual interpretation of dreams, and that American and European philosophy of religion which arose during the past century through contacts with Hinduism: the mystical oneness of all creatures; God as that Oneness; the fall and rise of souls, depending on their deeds (*karma*), expressed in reincarnation, and the reunion of the individual human with the perfect divine oneness through spiritual understanding.<sup>37</sup>

None of this is historically related to the traditions of Southern folklore, including the African American component, though the spirit of Edgar Cayce occupies the seat by the Dismal Swamp once occupied by Grace Sherwood and Gamby Gholar, and Cayce was in origin very much a Southerner, of the folk. We know little of Cayce the young seer during his first decade or two of practice, the readings, the style, the conceptualizations which he brought to explain what was happening to him. In the developed concerns of Cayce's readings and the commentaries of his followers, so heavily weighted with the topics and



style of recent Anglo-Saxon mysticism, to find suggestions of the older Southern folklore the reader needs to be looking for it. What relatively little there is, is not stressed.

And yet Edgar Cayce came of a family that had been deeply and actively involved in the folk traditions. Western Kentucky, the home of the Cayces, was the site of the most immense and astounding camp meeting in the history of Southern revivalism, with the Pentecostal "gifts of the Spirit" at their fullest and many a new enthusiast sect arising, in 1800, about the time the Cayces arrived in the west. Christian County, where Edgar Cayce was born, had been famous for the animal monstrosities born to its farm animals, phenomena often taken as signs of abnormal spiritual influences.<sup>38</sup>

The Cayces hailed from Virginia, the part of the State unspecified, and had spread to several regions of the South. The family name is a strange one, pronounced Casey, but not that Irish name according to the family's tradition. They said the original spelling had been Cuaci and was Norman-French, but their antecedents in the old world were untraceable.<sup>39</sup>

The Cayces of Kentucky were said to have been great landowners and to have owned slaves, their plantations stretching from Hopkinsville fifteen miles to the Tennessee line, yet Edgar's family was uneducated and he himself finished only nine grades, being sometimes called illiterate (an exaggeration).<sup>40</sup> Perhaps they represented a type of Southern frontier planter whose wealth did not imply education; perhaps the land was poor; perhaps the family had two branches, the planters, and the poor.

Edgar's grandfather had been a water witch or dowser, one who engaged in finding underground water for well-digging by carrying a forked stick which would turn in the hand at the correct location, a common American variation of Gamby Gholar's bluestone.<sup>41</sup> Grandfather Cayce was also able to see spiritual sights which were invisible to most people.<sup>42</sup> Though he forbore from such practices as trivial, he was said to be able to cause a broom to dance, and furniture to move, by 'unnatural' powers. The report about him strangest in terms of American folklore is that snakes loved Grandfather Cayce. They would follow him about. When he lay his hat upon the ground, they would curl around the brim.<sup>43</sup> What with the evil Bible reputation of the serpent, and the culture's general dislike of snakes, even the harmless ones, an affinity with snakes was a phenomenon rarely claimed as an honor in Anglo-Saxon society.

The entire family of little Edgar were of a special heritage. Grandmother Cayce, who was a Cayce by descent as well as marriage, was a believer in the old things.<sup>44</sup> Edgar's mother was possessed with

the gift of 'second sight,' able to see the same spirits which her little boy began to see; sometimes she called Edgar out to play with the spirit children.<sup>45</sup> If this was a Southern planter family, it did not fit the usual image.

The Cayces turned to African American conjure persons for medical aid, and to the wise and aged of the Black community for spiritual lore. Shortly after birth the infant Edgar was afflicted with severe pain, perhaps colic, but frightening in the unending cries the child gave forth. They sent for Patsy Cayce, an African American, who performed a ritual, and the attack ceased. One version of the legend states that she blew aromatic smoke of some special leaf from her pipe three times upon the soles of his feet, another version that she diagnosed the trouble as "milk on the breasts" and punctured each nipple with a needle, dissipating the pain-causing fluid. Patsy, who is sometimes called Emily Cayce, is explained as an ex-slave who lived at the Cayce's.<sup>46</sup>

It was Patsy Cayce who comforted the four-year-old Edgar when his grandfather died. The child asked if he'd ever see his granddaddy again, and Patsy reassured, "You has the second sight, ain't you?" Edgar's mother agreed: When you're a little older, maybe he'll teach you to fish and hunt.<sup>47</sup> Edgar did see and talk with Grandfather from time to time, he reported to Grandmother, and she was much gratified.<sup>48</sup>

Like other children, but with a most different context or result, Edgar as a child like to build 'play-houses,' bowers outdoors. The first he built in the garden near the farmhouse; there a little boy of his own age came to play with him, who could not be seen by most persons. Edgar's playmate introduced him to other invisible children, who also became his playmates for several years.<sup>49</sup> His mother approved of the children, and would call Edgar when they came by and asked if Eddie could come out and play.<sup>50</sup> His playmates lived in flowers, but Edgar also encountered other child spirits on an island in a nearby creek who would not play, whose only interests were the small wild creatures of nature.<sup>51</sup>

It was an African American of the Cayce farm or neighborhood, an aged woodchopper, who gave Edgar a lifelong fascination with the wonder stories of the Bible. The day was well remembered when the old man took the little boy aside and passed many hours recounting miraculous deeds in a style of narration gripping and impressive.<sup>52</sup> Thereupon the child vowed to read the Bible, and did so, twelve times through, before he was twelve years old.<sup>53</sup>

It was at this age that he build himself another bower of branches and vines, secluded in the woods, where he read his Scriptures.<sup>54</sup> On the day when he was reading the story of Manoah for the twelfth time,



Cayce received his call. The Bible passage is the tale of how an Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah, with the command that the son of Manoah should be consecrated to the Order of the Nazirites for the special service of God, and how the consecration was made with burnt offerings of cereal and kid. As young Cayce read this, an Angel of the Lord appeared in the shape of a woman, who told him that his prayers had been answered, that she was prepared to grant his desire; and he stated his wish, "to be helpful to others."<sup>55</sup> Edgar's mother was not surprised at the news; she encouraged her boy to believe in the vision, that it had not been of the Devil nor of the child's imagination.<sup>56</sup>

This was the formative environment of the child who became the most renowned American psychic of the twentieth century. He moved in the visionary world of ancient American tradition, far from the recent thought world of 'new thought,' theosophy and psychic research with which his work is today associated. To what extent the legends of young Cayce accurately tell the events believed about him and his kin in his childhood, or to what extent the legends are embroidered by the faulty memories and imaginations of his relatives and early associates who are their source, is not material to this study. For in the latter case, the legends still dramatically reveal the social environment which produced Edgar Cayce. When, in 1901, eleven years after the call, the young adult Cayce began his professional practice, white townspeople of Hopkinsville with a different heritage scoffed, "Only colored people have visions."<sup>57</sup>

Between 1901 and 1925 Edgar Cayce conducted his work with moderate success in Kentucky, then Alabama, then Texas.<sup>58</sup> He never took his home out of the South. In the latter part of this period the voice which spoke through him began to urge him to remove to Virginia Beach. Heading but not obeying, Cayce worriedly discussed with family and friends how the move could be accomplished. Years passed by, and the voice repeated its counsel.<sup>59</sup>

There had been no place called Virginia Beach until after Reconstruction: the location was merely the narrow isolated shore between the Atlantic and the Dismal Swamp.<sup>60</sup> On these empty sands of Princess Anne County, Blackbeard's crew had landed, and alter British expeditionary forces; nearby were Grace Sherwood's Lynnhaven, and Sigma where Burroughs and Stone had encountered their "Invisible Force." In 1883 the first hotel was built at Virginia Beach,<sup>61</sup> and by the early twentieth century it was Virginia's principal resort for the (white) middle class who could afford 'a vacation at the seashore.' It was inevitable that sons and daughters of conjure men and women of the Dismal Swamp region would move in to Virginia Beach or close by; here were holidayers with money and leisure, in search of something

different, and boarding facilities for those who traveled afar to consult the spiritual counselors. In the 1920s and 1930s there were two concentrations of psychic practitioners in the upper South, one along the old turnpike between Richmond and Petersburg, the other at Virginia Beach. Some, perhaps most, who traveled from other cities to consult the psychics at Virginia Beach were unaware of the Dismal Swamp tradition for spiritual wonders, and assumed that the concentration of spiritual consultants was the effect of a resort town's lenient police. Many cities, probably at the request of orthodox churches, forbade "fortune-tellers" and "mediums"; local practitioners set up their sign outside the city limits, or did not advertise.<sup>62</sup>

The voice that spoke through Edgar Cayce placed a high evaluation upon the spiritual power residing at the Dismal Swamp, or to use the skeptical alternative, the on-going spiritual tradition of the Dismal Swamp region was known to Cayce's fellow Southern psychics as far away as Texas or Alabama.

At first Cayce's voice did not specify the reason that Virginia Beach would provide an optimum atmosphere for spiritual inquiry, or the reason was not preserved. Just before the move was made, a reason was offered: the psychic power in Cayce worked better near large bodies of water, and it was helpful for clients to travel over water in seeking help.<sup>63</sup> (Virginia Beach is virtually an island, surrounded by the Atlantic, Chesapeake Bay, Albemarle Sound and the Dismal Swamp.) Later another reason was given: the sands of that Beach were curative.<sup>64</sup> Yet with sand baths only one minor technique among the many prescribed by Cayce's voice, and the closeness to large bodies of water the primary reason for the relocation, why Virginia Beach in particular? Why not Cape Cod? Long Island? Miami Beach? Discussion of the question in the circle around Cayce continued.<sup>65</sup> The voice never answered further. It never specified the ancient power or heritage of the region. If it had, perhaps Cayce's potential clientele would have misunderstood, turning their attention to other psychics of the region, or over-evaluating the power of the region while underevaluating the channel of the power, Edgar Cayce.

If Cayce in his natural state or any of his associates learned of the Dismal Swamp tradition, there were principles enunciated by the voice and by Cayce himself which lent weight to the notion that the Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center was a reason for the move to Virginia Beach. One was the principle that this region is a very special place, the other that geographical regions can be centers of spiritual power.

Among the readings are a number concerning future natural cataclysms. According to these prophecies, many parts of the United States are to be devastated by earthquakes and floods in a time to come,



including much of the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>66</sup> But not Virginia Beach. Virginia Beach would be spared. The region was an ark.<sup>67</sup>

The idea that particular regions may be imbued with a special affinity to psychic enlightenment is by no means foreign to the concepts of Edgar Cayce and his readings. Said he in his own capacity, relating insight received from a dream, not a reading:

There were certain portions of the country that produced their own radiation . . . I might be able to give a much better reading (*as the illustration was made*) for a person in Rochester, New York, than one in Chicago, Illinois, because the vibrations of Rochester were very much higher than the vibrations in Chicago.<sup>68</sup>

And so it was that in 1925 the headquarters of Edgar Cayce and his staff, later the Association for Research and Enlightenment, were established at Virginia Beach: a large building, built on what was probably the highest dune along that stretch of coast, commanding an unobstructed view of the ocean from the front, from the sides the sands stretching into the distance,<sup>69</sup> and from the rear, clearly visible, the line of vegetation which marked the edge of the Great Dismal Swamp.<sup>70</sup>

Before and after his settlement at Virginia Beach, Cayce had many a client somewhat familiar, and some clients very familiar, with varieties of twentieth century psychic interests, including those stimulated by American and European encounters with Hindu philosophy. When questions were asked from this context, the question to some extent determined the form of the answer. After Cayce's death, when most of the books about his readings were published, it was natural and right in the context of interested readers that many topics analyzed and commented upon should bear upon contemporary American metaphysical interests. This largely rules out from the literature about Cayce's readings the 'folklore,' the popular mysticism which on the North American continent has historically been the work of Africans, Native Americans and Poor Whites. As an official representative of one of the more important Hindu-related American psychic movements said (not connected with the A.R.E.), "Why should Ascended Masters choose to meet in that Dismal Swamp, when they have the beautiful high Himalayas on which to gather?"<sup>71</sup>

It would be significant as a possible link between Cayce's work and American 'folk' tradition if it could be shown that the source of the readings was conceived of as a personal Being, an angelic force, a Holy Spirit, that concept so central to African and Native American spiritual tradition and so minimal in European culture in general and twentieth

century Anglo-Saxon psychic movements in particular. But the source of Edgar Cayce's readings comes across as highly impersonal, fully consonant with the universal oneness of the New Thought movements, philosophies of universal mind, identification of the self with the all in the more Hindu-related schools, and the search for impersonal extra-sensory laws by psychic researchers. Cayce's followers might discuss whether his readings, spoken in trance, were from the meeting of his unconscious mind and that of his client, or the revelations of a universal mind, but the alternative rarely arose that he was possessed by a benign personal spirit of help, an angelic messenger.<sup>72</sup> The wording of the readings does not sound like those of any personal "Spirit": they are not often charismatic or even idiosyncratic; usually they have the ring of medical reports or pages from a book of expository philosophy. By the time Cayce's career was well developed, his family and staff were calling the source of the readings "the information": an apt description, far from the oracles of a Damballa, the sharp disturbing cries of Aunt Ferebee, the dance croonings of Grace Sherwood, or the shouts of a Kentucky camp meeting. Questioned, the voice defined itself as far as it could or would: its ultimate source was unknown; it included some depth of Cayce, but was also independent and much broader than any dimension of Cayce; it was intelligent and impersonal; it was in keeping with Biblical faith, but not antipathetic to the Western mystic understanding of Hindu faith.<sup>73</sup>

This is the impression received as well as stated self-definition of the readings of Edgar Cayce. For motifs in accord with the luxuriant Southern folklore in which the young Cayce was immersed it is necessary to search for traces and vestiges. Personal spiritual entities consonant with African and Native American Spirits and Cayce's invisible childhood visitors are occasionally mentioned in the readings as sources, but always they are 'consulted' by the impersonal investigative force. They never speak for themselves. They never possess and hardly appear to the adult Cayce in trance.<sup>74</sup> Also, in the early part of Cayce's career, a close associate speaks to Cayce of "that guardian spirit or force of yours."<sup>75</sup> Perhaps, only ten years after his first readings, the memory of the Spirits of his childhood was still fresh enough to cause Cayce to hesitate between the 'folk' concept of Spirit possession and the urban middle class concepts of impersonal psychic forces with which he was becoming acquainted. Then too, one of the recent students of Cayce and author of *A.R.E.: blessed books* sees something significant in the fact that the source of Cayce's readings usually referred to itself as "The Creative Forces" rather than The Creative Force. That author considers that the plural usage may be intended to suggest an infinite set of patterns and energies in the



universe, what disciples of Plato and Jung have called archetypes,<sup>76</sup> a view closer to the 'Many' of African and Native American Spiritism than to the 'One' stressed in Hindu and recent American psychic philosophies. Yet that author, immediately after mentioning the possibility of interpreting "The Creative Forces" as a hierarchy of spiritual Powers, cautions the reader against exotic and misleading practices such as the invocation of Spirits.<sup>77</sup> If such traces are vestiges of the old lore which so possessed Cayce's forebears, they are no more than that; the world of African-Native American-Poor White Spiritism is foreign to that of Cayce's developed readings and the work of the A.R.E.

In one area of the work, the interpretation of dreams, the readings given by Edgar Cayce offer a quite universal and straight-forward symbolism which seem to belong more to the 'folk' world of visions, omens, Spirit visitations and oracles than to the metaphysics of cosmic oneness or psychic research: fire represents anger, light insight, a child new beginnings, a horse and rider a message.<sup>78</sup> One symbol, the dragon, went squarely against the normative Western meaning. In the Cayce dream system it meant the sum of human emotions that are extreme and compelling, and of animal energies, a meaning not benign, but neither malignant.<sup>79</sup> It is a far cry from the diabolic European dragon, the symbol of avarice and murderous rage. As given in the Cayce readings the dragon is almost identical to the West African serpent symbolism of overwhelming vitality, as in the Damballa veneration maintained by Gamby Gholar and The Head, and conducted at Paradise Old Field, not far from the Cayce headquarters at Virginia Beach. This deviation of Cayce's dragon symbol from European culture also calls to mind the relationship with serpents enjoyed by Cayce's grandfather.<sup>80</sup>

Cayce himself believed that there is a rare type of dream which may almost be called a Vision, whose purpose is not to inform but to energize, like the conversion visions once required for membership in churches of the African American and Poor White communities. Of visions experienced by Cayce or others of his circle (in sleep, not trance), few stood out as sharply as one he experienced after settling at Virginia Beach and before the beginning of his national success.

He was carrying a message to the commander of an army. He toiled over mountains, then crossed a little stream into the camp. The troops were around campfires at breakfast, an army dressed all in white, uniforms, helmets, shoes, and an army without visible weapons. The enemy, the army of darkness, was nearby. They were not dark of skin, but dark in the shadows and clouds which surrounded and obscured them. The uniforms of this army of darkness were not black, but of dark grey and browns. Cayce's unconscious symbolism, unlike so

many persons of the majority American culture, never saw black as evil, a striking and surprising departure from the 'manichaeian' dualism of white and black so pervasive in racist society. An angel of light commanded the one army, an angel of darkness the other. Champions were chose to decide the battle by personal combat: Cayce was chosen for the Army of the Light. At last he remembered the message he had been sent to bring, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!" Wherewith he put down the champion of darkness, the angels of darkness fell back, and a shout of victory rose from the ranks of light. But at that moment the commander of the powers of darkness reached out and struck Cayce upon his left hip, and Cayce awoke from the vision, with severe pain in that joint.

As an A.R.E. commentator points out, what might be a paranoid psychotic dream in another person, cannot be so described in one who was so deeply nurtured as a child in a culture of mysticism, Biblical and otherwise.<sup>81</sup> This vision which so impressed Cayce and his associates is not from the conceptual and symbolic world of twentieth century psychic movements, whose theme is tranquillity not struggle, but from an older world where angelic visitors and armies were the stuff of lore, practice and faith: the world of John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, of the great Kentucky Revival of 1800, of Cayce's childhood Angels, of the African, Native American, British peasant lore of the Dismal Swamp maroons.

Except at time of personal stress, as in this dream of angel armies, Cayce no longer received Holy Spirits at some bower in the woods. They could not be relevant to the clientele, to the circle of modern-minded mystics who surrounded him. To Cayce the Spirits were now distant, but not forgotten, not even by the vaster, transcendent 'Mind' which now spoke to him in his trances. His circle observed the extraordinary awe which came upon Cayce when the question of angelic powers arose during his waking conversations; it was an

awe that touched even his readings those few times when the subject of angels came to the fore.<sup>82</sup>

Even "The Information," that impersonal, anonymous source of the readings which spoke through Edgar Cayce's lips, felt awe before the name of the Holy Angels!

Just as occasionally material in accord with Cayce's background in Southern folklore broke through the philosophy and research-oriented readings and commentaries, so also occasionally enemies and friends associated Cayce's contemporary-minded work with the older ways, with what had once been called sorcery, or conjure. Unfriendly persons



sometimes cut through the sophisticated language of contemporary mysticism to charge that Cayce's readings were the work of the Devil.<sup>83</sup> And the A.R.E.'s chief academic theologian, in discussing the problem of establishing canons for religious orthodoxy, and the history of religious persecution, includes among the victims of bigotry, along with church martyrs, those whose psychic practices led to their condemnation as witches. The identification of such works as Cayce's with theirs, when benign, is implied. Concerning the question of who should be considered the orthodox, the A.R.E. theologian asks sarcastically:

... ought the answer to be those untainted by visions, as it was for early American witchhunters?<sup>84</sup>

In one area of Cayce's spiritual work his heritage was unconcealed (or, as a believer would put it, his readings were in accord with his heritage). This was the use of herbs. Very many of the remedies prescribed by the readings were herbs, or other vegetables used as medicines, or old-fashioned patent medicines whose traditional contents are herbal. Moreover, as with other spiritual leaders before and since, the herb lore tradition in Cayce's work extended into voluminous and detailed advice on general diet.

Twenty years after his death, "In Cayce-land, another way of saying Virginia Beach, Cayce home remedies were as common as saying hello."<sup>85</sup> Raw cabbage for children's pinworms, steamed leaf lettuce as a sedative instead of sleeping pills, and above all, pokeweed as a "purifier." Said one of his followers:

It's a funny thing, but at a meeting of the Virginia Agricultural Association recently, they told everybody how to grow more corn by killing the surrounding pokeweed, and the pokeweed will do you more good than the corn ever could.<sup>86</sup>

Pokeweed is one of the Southern salad-greens, soul food, and this one grows wild, poor people's food free for the picking. In her personal life Cayce loved to grow things, and had a green thumb. His gardening was an immense success; he lavished loving care on the plants, and related this activity to his personal mysticism (as distinguished from that of his voice).<sup>87</sup> This, his herb lore, and his extolling of a poor people's free food, must have reminded people in Princess Anne County and the adjoining region of the Lady of the Lupine and the Rosemary, Grace Sherwood.

Though there has been change in the recent years, Black people have not belonged in large numbers to the white-founded psychic, mystic or occult movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Black community has had its own spiritually gifted persons and channels for such activity inside churches and out, and when African Americans used the writings of the mysticism of the majority it was usually without membership in those organized circles. Psychic or occult movements, like other organizations overwhelmingly white in membership, have included many persons with racial prejudices, who favored segregation and believed in the innate inferiority of Black people. If in the twentieth century, New Thought, Mediumistic Spiritualist, Hindu-related and theosophical societies and churches have not issued pronouncements on social justice as often as the Roman Catholic and major Protestant churches, and if it has sometimes seemed that there have been fewer liberals and more conservatives in these mystical or psychic circles, it is probably because an emphasis on unseen worlds tends to dismiss the social problems and struggles of the tangible world. Generally the doctrine of such movements proposes the solution of the problems of poverty, war, hate, oppression, through individual mental or psychic processes, not through social reform.

But social conservatism or a lack of attention to social problems, and racist pronouncements or a conservative approach to race relations or a turning away from the problem, were not attributes of Edgar Cayce. This white Kentuckian, who spent his life in that state and in Alabama, Texas and Virginia, and at a time when there were few white liberals in the South and the mass Civil Rights movement had not yet arisen, and the readings which came to Cayce, were concerned with the oppression of the Black people, and opposed to white racism, as important parts of the evil of social injustice. These attitudes of Cayce and his readings have been duly recorded in the commentaries of the A.R.E.<sup>88</sup>

While engaged in his spiritual work, Cayce organized and led groups at home in Kentucky and at Selma, Alabama, for aid to prison inmates. He himself taught reading and writing to persons imprisoned.<sup>89</sup> Among his readings on physical illness are those of African American clients, given free to those who could not pay, his custom to the Poor White or Black. In his reading of his own prior lives in the cycle of reincarnation, Cayce's voice informed him that he had lived lives as a member of five races, including four of the colors of mankind.<sup>90</sup>

The principles of race relations enunciated by Cayce's voice were sophisticated or sensitive and exceptionally advanced, with the flavor of the late 1960s rather than the years before the end of World War II. One



principle was that the white who has not actively or consciously engaged in racism nevertheless bears responsibility for his participation in the evil as a member of white society. A client asked Cayce about the guilt of white Southerners for chattel slavery and its fruit:

Q. What should be our attitude toward the Negro, and how may we best work out the karma (spiritual destiny created by deeds, good or evil) created in relationship with him?

A. He is thy brother! Those who caused or brought servitude to him, without thought or purpose, have created that which must be met within their own principles, their own selves. These (Negroes) should be held in an attitude of their own individual fitness—as in every other form of association. For He hath made of one blood the nations of the earth.<sup>91</sup>

Another principle of race relations stated in the readings is that personal kindness is not enough; there must be social change; human rights belong to all groups of man. Another principle is that it is not enough to hold a decent attitude privately, but that the white must take a stand; while not seeking martyrdom, he must carry out his moral duty at the risk of social penalties. Another principle is that 'moral support' for justice is not sufficient; action is demanded. Another principle is that action for racial justice should not be taken in some remote place but in each person's own sphere, in his own work or social circle: the musician, the doctor, the organizer, the manufacturer, the waitress, the psychic, each is called to act for racial justice in his or her place in society. The readings are explicit: The economically disadvantaged and members of ethnic minorities are direct challenges to morality. The answer to who is my brother is, he that is nearby.<sup>92</sup>

Cayce's readings prophesied the coming intensification of the conflict between racism and racial justice. They spoke often of the insincerity of leaders in race relations, with worse mishandling yet to come, and of a war between the races before the inevitable fulfillment of the equality of mankind.<sup>93</sup>

Unless dealings one with another are in keeping with His tenets, they must fail . . . *There cannot be one measuring stick for the laborer in the field or the man behind the money changers!* All are equal—not only under the material law, but under the spiritual law. And His laws, His will, will not come to naught! Though periods may come when there will be great stress—as brother rises against brother, as a group or 'sect or race rises against—yet the leveling must come.<sup>94</sup>

Cayce's voice was a radical Populist, and a Populist which very much included the African American people in the vision of the good society. One other principle of race relations proclaimed by the voice of Cayce was a prefiguring of the Black Power principle, self-determination:

Being my brother's keeper does not mean that I am to tell him what to do, or that he must do this or that, regardless. Rather, that all are free before the law and before God.<sup>95</sup>

Mysticism need not be other-worldly. If its purpose is liberation from the world of the senses, it must be. If its purpose is increase of psychic energy for living, it cannot be. The seer who in childhood had been spiritually nurtured by the conjure woman Patsy Cayce and the aged Black teller of miracle tales, whose own family was richly endowed with the Southern Poor White cultural heritage, brought into his adult work not only glimpses of the old ways amid the new philosophies, but also a sense of the historic inter-relatedness of the African American and Southern Poor White peoples. So strongly did Edgar Cayce hold to this sense of the relatedness of the races that his voice spoke for racial justice in the decades when no visible crack had yet appeared in the caste oppression of the South.

The mystic need not be otherworldly; indeed, the African American and Southern poor white mysticism has never been. Its purposes were always practical help for the individual and community, sometimes for the community in armed rebellion. In this respect Edgar Cayce or his voice must remind us of Gamby Gholar and the other Seven-Finger High Glisters who directed the spiritual practitioners of the upper South from the Dismal Swamp a century before Cayce. The success of the struggle against slavery was always the chief purpose of their occult work:

When approaching the region of the Dismal Swamp, a number of the old confederates of the noted Nat Turner were met with, who hailed the daring young runaway as the harbinger of better days . . .

"I been lookin' fah yeh dis many years," said the old Gamby Gholar, a noted high conjurer and compeer of Nat Turner, who for more than thirty years had been secluded in the Swamp, "an' been tellin' on 'em dat yeh 'ood come long, but da (they) 'ooden heah dat I tole 'em! Now da see! Dis many years I been seein' on yeh! Yes, 'ndeed, chile, dat I has!" . . .



In this fearful abode for years of some of Virginia and North Carolina's boldest black rebels, the names of Nat Turner, Denmark Veezie, and General Gabriel were held by them in sacred reverence; that of Gabriel as a talisman. With delight they recounted the many exploits of whom they conceived to be the greatest men who ever lived . . .

. . . the only difficulty in the way . . . (was) that the slaves in the different states could not be convinced of their strength . . . (Maudy Ghamus) had himself been an emissary; also Gamby Gholar, who had gone out among them with sufficient charms to accomplish all they desired, but could not induce the slaves to a general rising . . .

. . . (The young insurrectionary leader was) now well refreshed . . . and in the estimation of Gholar, Ghamus and the rest of the "Heads," well qualified to prosecute his project amidst the prayers, blessings, wishes, hopes, fears, pow-wows and promises of a never failing conjuration . . .<sup>96</sup>

What was Edgar Cayce? His social philosophy was not far from Gamby Gholar's; their vocation was virtually the same. They were formed of the same heritage; their methods differed in detail but not in essence; the purpose of their ministrations to clients was the same. For Cayce's time, his milieu, his clientele, only vestiges of the old symbols and concepts came through the mass of readings offered in the twentieth century psychic style. But in terms of function this too is a detail: whatever the metaphysical language, Cayce's purpose was to help people in their living, not take them out of the world. He remained true to the gift he asked and received from the Lady Angel when he was twelve, and to the folk tradition which produced such Spirits.

Grace Sherwood, Gamby Gholar and Edgar Cayce were conjure persons. Even Cayce would probably have accepted the term, in his early if not his late career. They and the lesser known spiritual leaders of the Dismal Swamp, in reciprocal action with the culture of the people of the region, made the Dismal Swamp the spiritual center of the upper South. This extraordinary spiritual activity, together with the tenacity of political and social continuity, and the war against slavery, were the great historic accomplishments of the maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp and its precursor and subsequent societies.

During the past decade some of the persons who have visited the shrine of Edgar Cayce, the headquarters of the A.R.E. on the high dune of Virginia Beach, have gazed at night to the west through the rear windows of the building and have reported that they saw lights winking within the Dismal Swamp. A legend has grown up about these reported

lights. The Dismal Swamp is the east coast American meeting place for a brotherhood of light, masters of spiritual power who have reached the highest possible grade of enlightenment, and whose work in the world is the guidance of others who on less advanced levels perform spiritual works for the advancement of mankind.<sup>97</sup> Some of the new people at Virginia Beach must have been talking with some of the old Swamp folks. For this legend of the 1970s is practically word for word the definition of the Council of Seven reported in the 1850s. The spiritual leaders of the maroons still meet in legend, as long ago they met in life.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 9, notes 17–22.

<sup>2</sup> Martin R. Delany, *Blake, or the Huts of America: A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States and Cuba* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. xix–xxi, 112–13. The time of the observation reported is no earlier than about 1840, and no later than the early 1850s; the source states that the council had existed for more than thirty years; therefore the period of the council was either from about 1805 to about 1840 (and after) or from about 1815 to about 1850 (and after). The time common to the estimates is from about 1815 to the 1840s. The novel *Blake*, is a political document. To justify its use as a source for Dismal Swamp maroon history, two things must be shown. One, general, is that the book is a political document in the literal, narrow sense, not merely a novel of social protest, that it recounts in fictionalized form the political biography and ambitions of the author, that it is primarily a presentation of his political program, a slightly disguised manifesto of Delany's political philosophy and movement. The other, specific, point that must be demonstrated to authenticate the source is that the chapter on the Dismal Swamp and its council of conjure men had its own political purpose, and if its background material was fictional, and were exposed as such, Delany's political credibility would have been severely injured if not destroyed.

Though the book is clearly written, fast paced and coherently plotted as a novel, and readers have enjoyed it as an adventure tale, practically every chapter is either documentary-like, descriptions of varieties of slave community or else polemical, arguing the feasibility of such revolt and its



subsidiary problems. Throughout the book there are non-fictional footnotes to indicate that the passages are reports of actual events. The editor of the 1970 edition states that the work displays an "uncanny accuracy" in its descriptions of Cuban society and the international political ramifications of pro- and anti-slavery forces on that island in the half of the book whose scene is that locale. For the other half of the book, visits to slave plantation communities in the United States, the editor sees the work as a social historical account of slavery, with a sharp focus on the political milieu of the 1850s (pp. xii, xxiii). The recent biographer of Delany concurs, and adds that there are valuable observations included of sometimes "strange habits" in the Black communities. (Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, p. 201.)

Part One of *Blake* tells of the hero's escape from slavery and his underground tour of the entire South, observing conditions and their variations, ascertaining the attitudes of slaves in the various regions, testing their readiness for a concerted universal uprising, and leaving each community in wait for future word from him when the hour has struck. In Part Two, Blake joins an island-wide slave insurrection movement in Cuba, and is placed in military command. The final chapters of the book are missing, but must have linked up in the Caribbean insurrection with that planned in the Southern United States, or else Part One would have no meaning in relation to Part Two; and the book is otherwise well organized, its author brilliant in writing as in other crafts.

Blake's exploits are closely parallel to the political life, actual and intended, of Martin Delany. In 1839-1840 he made a clandestine tour of the slave South such as Blake's; in 1851-52 a revolutionary Black regime of the "Mosquito" Coast (eastern Nicaragua) elected him Governor and Commander-in-chief in absentia, whereupon he sought a cabinet of like-minded Black Abolitionists, wrote and distributed a guarded manifesto for Black Nationalism and a free Black anti-slavery state in Central America (*The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States Politically Considered*, [Philadelphia: n.p., 1852]), and began *Blake*, which he continued working on through the 1850s; and in 1854 he organized and led into the Civil War years an active and sizable Pan-African Nationalist Abolitionist event, for the establishment of a Black nation as a place of refuge and a power center for those still enslaved.

Enmity and intrigue between Britain and the United States lent credibility both to the fictionalized account in *Blake* and the political program of Delany in the early 1850s. The Black revolutionary regime in Central America was British-allied; it was eventually overthrown by forces from the United States (Ullman, Delany, p. 139). In Cuba British agents worked among the enslaved towards an insurrection which would bring the island into the British Empire, while agents from the United States worked among slaveholders towards a strictly political insurrection which would bring Cuba into the sphere of the U.S. slavery states. Both Britain and the United States were interested in the future of Spain's collapsed Caribbean

colonies, in which of the Powers would bear major influence on mainland Latin-America, and in which would construct a Central American canal. The director of British foreign policy, Lord Palmerston was both anti-slavery and anti-American. War between the two Powers was considered likely in both countries. And in Britain's hands the political weapon of anti-slavery was powerful, since she had ended slavery in the Empire twenty years before, while in the United States acute sectional strife over the issue of the extension of slavery rendered national unity doubtful in the even of a pro-slavery war against Britain (or a British Anti-slavery attack on the U.S.).

The extraordinary fact that a Black revolutionary regime in Central America elected as Commander-in-Chief, sight-unseen, the most militant Black Abolitionist in the United States (more militant than his associate and friend Frederick Douglass) can only be related to British intrigue against American influences in Latin-America, in light of British support for the Central American regime, pro-British statements in Delany's writings, British use of anti-slavery as a weapon of political warfare, and general foreign relations of the two Powers in the Western Hemisphere. To unify and make sense of the two parts of the book, Blake's Cuban army of liberation would have had to make contact with the South-wide slave insurrection in the United States, by the only geographical means possible, across the Gulf of Mexico to Florida or more likely to the coasts of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana or Texas. Delany as a revolutionary Governor in Central America indicates that something like this program was in Delany's mind for the real world as well as for the pages of his 'novel,' and in the minds of Palmerston's Caribbean-Central American agents, as a contingency plan in the event of war with the United States.

Thus *Blake* is essentially a mirror of Delany's activities and plans for himself and his movement, in the early 1850s. The only prominent difference is that in one the center of international anti-slavery activity was Cuba, in the other, Central America. Readers were more likely to be familiar with Cuba than the "Mosquito" coast; and the two lands were part of the same British and anti-slavery intrigue. It is hardly conceivable that the dedicated Delany would have taken time from his incredibly busy life as Abolitionist leader, Nationalist leader, physician and Freemason to write a tale of adventure, even with social content, to fulfill himself as a novelist. It is inconceivable that he would have risked exposure of his plans by writing a fictionalized political biography for any but the weightiest reasons. The desire to counteract the impression of slave submissiveness given in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and hope to raise funds for his movement may well have entered into his writing of *Blake*. But this fictionalized political biography is primarily a presentation of the political philosophy, aims and activities of Delany and his movement: international anti-slavery struggle, with a territorial base, at a time of favorable international relations. Unlike fictional entertainments, which are rarely susceptible to historical use, this political document in a literal sense, can be used as are other political documents.



It is now necessary to consider the validity of the chapter on the Dismal Swamp and its council of conjurers. This is one of Blake's stops on his underground tour of the slave South. The editor of the 1970 edition finds this fictionalized tour to rest on Delany's notes or memories of his own tour, ten years before; Delany's footnotes indicate as much. His dangerous journey, in 1839 and 1840, in which he pretended to be a slave running an errand for his master, and secretly spoke with Black people in many plantations and settlements, is said to have been through the States of Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas (*Blake*, xix, xxi, xxii). Therefore the chapters which continue Blake's journey to the Southeast, including the Dismal Swamp, must have as their sources an unrecorded extension of Delany's 1839-1840 journey, reports to Delany from other clandestine travelers in that part of the South, or later briefer trips of this kind by Delany. For lengthy periods Delany's whereabouts are unknown; it is known that he was familiar as a sometime resident with a point as far southeast as Philadelphia.

Whatever its source, what was Delany's purpose in including a visit to the Dismal Swamp council of conjure men in this political manifesto? The point of the chapter, to the hero Blake, is that the council elevates him to the rank of High Conjuror, prepares and presents him with a very special blessing for his universal slave insurrection, figuratively places the mantle of Gabriel and Nat Turner (whom they knew) upon his shoulders, and places their network of East Coast conjurers at his political disposal.

In real life Delany would undoubtedly have been much gratified at receiving such a blessing, for the political support that would accrue from the followers of these spiritual leaders, and the power in the communities of the leaders themselves. There is no particular reason to think that Delany was a devout believer or participant in Spiritism, but he was an extremely ardent devotee of African culture, taking great pride in his family's tradition of descent from King Shango of the Yorubas, who upon his death was canonized as one of the most important West African Holy Spirits. In negotiating the Treaty of Abeokuta with Yoruba Kings for the founding of an African American nation on the Niger, Delany found his traditional descent from Shango very helpful: he may have found it of help elsewhere; Shango is the paramount Holy Spirit of Cuba and Trinidad in the West Indies and therefore perhaps an important Spirit in other parts of the Americas where Delany's political movement has connections. (Frances Rollin, *The Life and Services of Martin R. Delany*, [Boston: Lee and Shepard. 1862]).

When Delany penned the chapter on the Dismal Swamp it is inescapable that this man who was so proud of his descent from Shango and whose program received support from it, considered how much greater his support might be if he also possessed a blessing from that other most venerated Holy Spirit, Damballa, the benign serpent Spirit who was patron of the Dismal Swamp and its council of High Conjurers. In this political document *Blake*, the political purpose of this chapter on the Dismal Swamp is to show how Delany's philosophy, aims and activities, which already had the blessing of Shango and the interest of His followers from Delany's

1800-1850  
Zimbabwe

descent, also possessed the blessing of Damballa, through the actions of Damballa's high council in the Dismal Swamp. Now the movement led by Delany possessed the blessing and hopefully the support of the followers of both of the two major Holy African Spirits venerated in the Western Hemisphere.

Is it not likely though that Delany simply fabricated the chapter on the Dismal Swamp conjure council, in order to gain the interest and support of devotees of Damballa, without factual basis? It is not, if only because of the political danger to which such a fabrication would have exposed him and his movement. The Nationalist Abolitionists led by Delany were a minority of the Black Abolitionists in the United States. The majority, led by Frederick Douglass, were integrationist Abolitionists, who believed that white racism as well as slavery could be ended. These two opposing camps did not fight bitterly, or expose dirty linen in public, but they were openly and sharply critical of one another. If there were no central council of high conjure men in the Dismal Swamp which supervised conjure men and women of the plantations and towns in Virginia and North Carolina, anti-Delany Black Abolitionists, some of whom were undoubtedly conjure men themselves, and many acquainted with such seers, would have soon made it known in the Black community by word of mouth. This charge, of lying on important matters, matters sacred to some, would have gone hard against Delany, against both his credibility and his honor. Instead of gaining support from African Spiritists of the upper South whose patron was Damballa, he would have lost support from a much broader constituency. Little was publicly known of Delany's private attitudes toward African values, but from that little it can only be concluded that he would not have stooped to a fabrication on such a subject. But much is known of Delany's political acumen, and from this it is certain that the politically acute Delany would not have risked this end to his program. The reasonable conclusion is that Delany knew that there was a Spiritist council for the upper South in the Dismal Swamp, and that any comments on the veracity of the chapter would be positive. For the same reasons Delany must have obtained some kind of blessing from this council general and *in absentia*, if not specific and in person, like Blake's.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115n. Here is one of the footnotes found throughout Blake in which Delany refers the reader from the fictionalized narrative to the realities of Black society; in this case he is presenting his intended Black readership with detailed information on a specialized and to many sacred facet of African American culture. If this were a fabrication it would be a brazen, sacrilegious and detectable lie, and therefore it is on fabrication. See also footnote 2 above.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.



<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

<sup>10</sup> The existence of this family name in the Black community today, a most unusual name and with the same unusual spelling, not simplified to some such spelling as Golar or Goller, is a verification of the already established validity of *Blake* as a source. Delany was not “making up” the name, however strange it is. The identity of the person located and interviewed is not given here, for reasons of privacy. To serious inquirers however the author will identify the written public record in which the current existence of the family is established. The family traditions included nothing regarding Gamby Gholar or the states of Virginia or North Carolina, and no pattern of religious or other spiritual vocations. This family traces itself back to the Civil War, short of the time of Gamby Gholar by two generations, and to the deep South. The informant however made several statements of possible interest; the family tradition has been that the name is African; Grandfather or Great Grandfather, the earliest known member of this family, is said to have been born in Africa; and a branch of the family which had changed the name to Golar corrected the spelling upon meeting the Gholars.

<sup>11</sup> Delany, *Blake*, pp. 112–114. The family of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) were treasure-seekers in early nineteenth century northern New York State; they used a seeing glass which was supposed to allow one to see into the side of a hill. According to the Latter Day Saints, the golden tablets on which was written *The Book of Mormon* were translated by means of a sacred seeing device which they call Urim and Thummin, from the Bible words.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Kavalam Madhusuban Panikkar, *The Serpent and the Crescent* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964).

<sup>15</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 239; Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1960), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79; Herskovits, *Myth*, p. 239.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233; Courlander, *Drum and Hoe*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *Legends and Myths of North Carolina's Roanoke-Chowan Area* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 59–64; H. B. Ansell, “Recollections of a Lifetime, Knotts Island, Currituck County, North Carolina,” Ansell manuscript vol. 1, Southern Historical Manuscript Collection, University of North Carolina Library, p. 108.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> E. W. Burroughs, *The Invisible Forces* (Virginia Beach, Va.: n.p., 1953), pp. 3, 5, 16–17. The work includes a number of excerpts from newspapers.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10, 16–18.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5, 16–17.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> The number of pages in this study devoted to the three great historic spiritual leaders centered on the Dismal Swamp should not be taken as a indication of their relative importance to the history of the Dismal Swamp as a spiritual center, one of the outcomes of maroon culture. Edgar Cayce receives extensive treatment, Grace Sherwood, less, and Gamby Gholar (with the Council of Seven) relatively little. In the efforts for regional communications and unity associated with the maroon paramount chief Peter II, the fact of the Council represents the formal organization of the already ancient spiritual tradition of the Swamp. Grace Sherwood is the second most important, because she as the first to dramatize or incarnate in her own person, at a very early date, the distinctive culture arising at the Dismal Swamp and the spiritual reputation of that place, thus advancing both. Least important is Edgar Cayce, because his work represents the virtual disappearance of the cultural heritage into a totally different Anglo-Saxon mysticism, though the Dismal Swamp, as a spiritual center, remains.

The reasons for the anomalous reversal of space allotted in proportion to their importance are the number of sources available for each, and the amount of discussion required to cope with the historical problems which arise from each. The most copious sources are for Edgar Cayce, because he is the most recent, and his organization has enjoyed the services of the mass media of majority American society. And the historical problem raised by Cayce's work is the most time-consuming, requiring the lengthiest discussion: to dig among and below the mass of Anglo-Saxon twentieth century mystic ideology to find the remnants of ancient Spiritism from which Edgar Cayce arose. There are fewer sources for the life and work of Grace Sherwood, and the historical problem in her case does not require quite so lengthy a treatment: the establishment of her links with Africa. In the case of Gamby Gholar and the Council of Seven, there is only one direct source, and the historical problem of identifying the Patron Spirit of the Council and the Swamp does not require lengthy discussion.



<sup>31</sup> Hugh Lynn Cayce, *Venture Inward* (New York, Harper and Row, 1972), p. 28. The copyright is 1964.

<sup>32</sup> Hugh Lynn Cayce, ed., *The Edgar Cayce Reader* (New York, Paperback Library, Coronet Communications, 1969), p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31–46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9; Cayce, *Venture Inward*, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Cayce, *The Edgar Cayce Reader*, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6; Thomas Sugrue, *There Is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., new ed., 1967), pp. 305–7. The first copyright is 1942.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Millard, *Edgar Cayce: Mystery Man of Miracles* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, rev. ed., 1967), p. 11. The first copyright is 1956.

<sup>39</sup> Sugrue, *There Is a River*, p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> Gina Cerminara, *Many Mansions* (New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 19. The copyright is 1950.

<sup>41</sup> Sugrue, *There is a River*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 40.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24; Millard, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Sugrue, *There is a River*, pp. 34, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Millard, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 16; Sugrue, *There Is a River*, p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> Millard, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Sugrue, *There is a River*, p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28, 45–46.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>58</sup> Cayce, *Edgar Cayce Reader*, pp. 40–52.

<sup>59</sup> Sugrue, *There Is a River*, p. 191.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), p. 295.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*; Louisa Venabel Kyle, *Virginia Beach History* (n.p.: Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce, n.d.), n.p.

<sup>62</sup> The author remembers from the 1930s in Richmond, Va., his family and their friends discussing the visits of acquaintances to Virginia Beach to consult mediums or psychics. The author's memory that Virginia Beach and vicinity were considered a place of concentration for psychic practitioners prior to Edgar Cayce's rise to fame is confirmed by the Reverend Fred Jordan, minister of the Christian Metaphysical Chapel, Norfolk, Virginia, interview, 1972. He is also the source for the statement that the turnpike south from Richmond towards the North Carolina line was another center. This particular Spiritualist minister was selected to interview because his was the only Spiritualist church listed in the Norfolk telephone directory whose phone is regularly covered, or because other ministers would not be available for some time. The Rev. Mr. Jordan has noted that though Spiritualist churches are likely to be listed in telephone directories, mediums in private practice are not.)

<sup>63</sup> Sugrue, *There Is a River*, p. 227.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>66</sup> Jess Stearn, *Edgar Cayce-The Sleeping Prophet* (New York, Bantam Books, 1968), 3-5.

<sup>67</sup> Interview, James Saxild, Program Chairman, Chicago, Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.), 1972. His office is not that usually associated with this title, but is a staff position concerned with the educational and other activities of the study groups sponsored by the A.R.E.

<sup>68</sup> Harmon Hartzell Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Dreams* (New York: Paperback Library, Coronet Communications, 1968), pp. 115-16.

<sup>69</sup> Cayce, *Edgar Cayce Reader*, p. 45.

<sup>70</sup> Interview, James Saxild.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, identification withheld. The quotation is given as a classic expression of the gulf between ancient American 'folk' mysticism and late nineteenth-twentieth century Anglo-Saxon psychic movements and ideologies, even though historically the former may have prepared the ground for the latter.

<sup>72</sup> Sugrue, *There Is a River*, p. 25.

<sup>73</sup> Harmon Hartzell Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Religion and Psychic Experience* (New York, Paperback Library, Coronet Communications, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> Cayce, *The Edgar Cayce Reader*, p. 107.



<sup>75</sup> Millard, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 89.

<sup>76</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Religion*, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>78</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Dreams*, p. 113.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>80</sup> See above, notes 11–18 and 43, and Chapter 13, notes 20–21.

<sup>81</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Dreams*, pp. 138–40.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>84</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Religion*, p. 140.

<sup>85</sup> Stearn, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 197.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Religion*, p. 120.

<sup>88</sup> Cayce, *The Edgar Cayce Reader*, p. 138.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> Bro, *Edgar Cayce on Religion*, p. 141.

<sup>93</sup> Stearn, *Edgar Cayce*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>94</sup> Cayce, *The Edgar Cayce Reader*, p. 79.

<sup>95</sup> Stearn, *Edgar Cayce*, p. 88.

<sup>96</sup> Delany, *Blake*, p. 112–114.

<sup>97</sup> Interview, James Saxild. Inevitably the A.R.E. people who received and adapted this legend associated the secret Dismal Swamp council of spiritual leaders with the doctrine of the Ascended Masters taught mainly by the Theosophical Society but also known in other twentieth century Anglo-Saxon American psychic or mystic movements. The Ascended Masters are believed to be an ancient, secret, invisible and immortal fraternity of spiritual adepts who have reached the ultimate height of enlightenment. Until recently they were also called the White Brotherhood, referring to their moral leadership, not their ethnicity, since many are deemed to be non-European, but this term is no longer used by the Theosophical Society, in response to an understanding of the racist implications of the manichaeism symbolism of white and black for good and evil. Interviews, Librarian and Secretary, Theosophical Society, Wheaton, Ill., 1972. Identification of the legendary Dismal Swamp High Conjurers with the Ascended Masters of Theosophic doctrine was inevitable because of similarities between the historic maroon group and the psychic doctrinal

group: both groups consist of spiritual leaders who are considered to have reached the highest level of wisdom, both are organized groups with regular meetings, and both have the same function, of directing the progress of lesser spiritual leaders.



## Book Three

### The Maroons of the South Carolina Hills

## Chapter 15

### “Rogues and Vagabonds”: The Gathering of the Community and the First Maroon War 1720–1769

The first Anglo-Saxon pioneers entered the back country of South Carolina in the 1750s; larger numbers followed them in the 1760s, after the defeat and exile of the Cherokee Nation in the Cherokee War of 1760–1761. These settlers were astonished and dismayed to find the land already occupied by English-speaking pioneers who were not of the Anglo-Saxon community. They were persons of African, Native American and Poor White descent, numbering thousands, inhabiting many settlements, but one community in political and military organization and in their distinctive culture.

The principal source of information on this society, the only Anglican missionary in the back country, was emphatic in his statements that this community was radically different from the Anglo-Saxon. Outspoken in his bias, the missionary wrote that there were two peoples residing in the back country, the serious and moral, and the disorderly and vile.<sup>1</sup>

Today's historian of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the South Carolina back country agrees that the “lower people” constituted a distinct community in the ethnic or sociological sense:

... respectable, honest settlers dedicated to the establishment of law and order and the inviolability of property were by no means dominant in Back country society in the middle 1760s. Outlaws and lower people represented a counter way of life amoral and apathetic or even hostile to the sanctity of property.<sup>2</sup>



There are ample contemporary testimonies that the people who held such a distinct culture were of other than Anglo-Saxon ancestry. A Remonstrance of the Anglo-Saxon pioneers refers to the other community as "persons of all countries, complexions and characters" and as "the Hordes of Mullatoes and Villains we are pester'd with." The document describes the lot of the back country Anglo-Saxons as "set adrift in the Wild Woods among Indians and outcasts."<sup>3</sup> In another protest the planter pioneers ask rhetorically:

Is it not Slavery to be subject to the Impudence, Impertinence and Insults of Free Negroes and Mullatoes who greatly abound here? and who have taken Refuge in these Parts from the Northern Colonies, perhaps for Crimes committed there?<sup>4</sup>

The Anglican writes in his journal:

The people around [are] of abandon'd Morals, and profligate Principles- Rude- Ignorant- Void of Manners Education or Good Breeding . . . of all Sects and Denominations—a mix'd Medly of all countries and the Off-Scouring of America.<sup>5</sup>

In his role as circuit rider, the Anglican entered communities probably never before visited by an outsider. At a place called "Beaver Creek" he baptized several 'negroes' and 'mulattoes' on his first visit. At Granny Quarter Creek he observed:

. . . not the least Rudiments of Religion, Learning, Manners or Knowledge . . . Such a Pack I never met with . . . Neither English, Scots, Irish or Carolinian by Birth . . .

Later on his return to Granny Quarter Creek he wrote:

. . . [I] preach'd to a mix'd Multitude of People from various Quarters- But no bringing of this Tribe into any Order. They are the lowest Pack of Wretches my Eyes ever saw . . . as wild as the very Deer . . .

From another community, Flatt Creek, he reported:

Here I found a vast Body of People assembled- Such a Motley! such a mix'd multitude of all Classes and Complexions I never saw . . . Most of these People had never before . . . heard the Lords Prayer, Service or Sermon in their Days. I was a great curiosity to them . . . after Service they went to Revelling Drinking Singing and Whoring . . . They were as rude in their Manners as common Savages and hardly a degree removed from them. Their dresses almost as loose and naked as the Indians . . . I could not conceive from whence this vast Body could swarm— But this Country contains ten times the Number of Persons beyond my Apprehension.

As he continued his journeys, he noted "more Mullatoes than ever before."<sup>6</sup>

When Charleston began to grasp the situation in the back country, the press reported (July 1768) that the "Rogue" community were "Mullattoes, Free Negroes, etc. notorious Harborers of runaway slaves" and in August described them as "outcast Mulattoes, Mustees, Free Negroes etc."<sup>7</sup> The general meaning of mustee is any mixture of ancestry, a variant of the word mestizo. But in the context of this listing, it indicates the narrower meaning of mestizo, a person of Native American and European ancestry.

The missionary, white pioneers and the Charleston press agreed: the back-country people found by Anglo-Saxon settlers were 'colored.' And there are other indications of this fact.

Besides Granny Quarter Creek and Flatt Creek, the two huge civilian maroon settlements that are named, there are three smaller war band settlements identified by name or location. Along the Savannah River was a stockaded settlement of African fugitive slaves, who specialized in raiding Georgia plantations across the river. When the planter pioneers burst upon it, two Africans were upon the wall of the fort, one hoisting a flag, the other beating upon a drum. Presumably they were warning their brothers and sisters, for none were captured. The settlement was well-supplied with axes and other tools, pots, pails and blankets.<sup>8</sup> Another war band settlement specified was that of Thompson's Creek, west of the Peedee River, also a center for escaped slaves and other refugees.<sup>9</sup> The third specified 'outlaw' camp, near Drowning Creek, was commanded by a 'mulatto,' Winsler Driggers. His band numbered fifty fighting men, which could mean a total population of two hundred. The settlement was taken, but only after a bloody battle in which Captain Driggers was severely wounded and two



other maroons killed. The captain was hanged at Charleston as a slave rebel under the Carolina Black Code. South Carolina legend a century later made him a Tory guerrilla leader during the American Revolution, which may indicate that some of his company survived to fight again, or that folk tradition correctly associated the "rogues and vagabonds" with the Tories of the American Revolution in the Southern back country.

Eight physical descriptions of other maroon Captains have been preserved: three are described by height and build only; three are reported to have had dark hair; and two, Captain James Ashworth and Captain John Arts, are described as having had dark hair and swarthy skin.<sup>10</sup> "Negroes," "mulattoes," "Mustees," "a mix'd multitude," persons who had taken "Refuge in these Parts," and "Harborers of runaway slaves": the people of interior South Carolina, like those of the Great Dismal Swamp, were a maroon community in the strictest sense of the term.

There are sources for the background and motives of the three racial and ethnic groups, African American, Native American and Poor White, before they joined into one community. Most familiar is the enormity of the chattel slavery in which Black people were bound. Holding people as personal property, subjecting them to the practically absolute power of masters, separating loved ones, and seeking to render the enslaved docile by preachments of racism, this most inhuman form of servitude provided more than enough motive for the widespread resistance, frequent revolts and plans for revolt, and chronic and universal escapes of the Black people. During the period in which the maroons of the west gathered, the 1720s to 1760s, the enslaved Black population in the South increased from less than 50,000 to over 40,000, and as population grew, escapes increased. An estimate of 60,000 persons who successfully, permanently escaped is offered by one scholar, and this figure is only for those who escaped to the North, and therefore focused on the period after the American Revolution. Another scholar proposes a much higher estimate of successful escapes to the North: 100,000 for the period between 1810 and 1850.<sup>11</sup>

No estimates have been attempted for the number of Black people who succeeded in escaping to Florida in the eighteenth century, to Mexico in the nineteenth and to maroon sanctuaries and the West during both centuries. There is no reason to think the number any less than those who successfully fled to the North.

The one study of Black guerrilla bands has identified fifty significant battles or campaigns during the slavery period in the east without seeking to locate civilian maroon settlements or either type of community in the West, on or beyond the frontier.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Black people escaped from slavery were seeking union with militant Indians

beyond the Anglo-Saxon frontier before the 1760s. In 1747 the first Anglo-Saxon explorer to one neighborhood of the Cherokee territory discovered a place already called Cuffeytown, Cuffey being one of the frequently encountered Black names of West African origin.<sup>13</sup> In 1750 escaped Black slaves joined with Indians under French auspices against the South Carolina militia at the Battle of Fort Custasaw.<sup>14</sup> African Americans and the militant faction of the Creek Nation continued to work together against white power as they had since the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> Black delegates met with the Cherokee leadership towards a possible formal alliance, informing the Indians that Blacks outnumbered whites in the plantation country "and that for the Sake of Liberty they would join them."<sup>16</sup> And John Case, an African American from Virginia, was a leader of the Chickasaw Nation to the west of Carolina, described by the colonial authorities as "an extraordinary Woodsman . . . (who) may be a dangerous consequence to this Nation," *i.e.*, to the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>17</sup>

Others of planter society saw the possibility of Black fugitive slaves' becoming a strong maroon people. At the end of the Cherokee War a South Carolina author pointed out that the Colony had been fortunate in the lack of friendship between Indians and Blacks, and admonished his people never to exterminate the Indians, lest the frontier be taken over by English-speaking Africans. At about the same time the Lieutenant Governor, William Bull, spoke of the danger of the West's becoming a refuge for fugitive Negroes, like the mountains of Jamaica. Within five years these prophecies had proven true.<sup>18</sup>

The origin of the Native American component of the back country community, Indian slavery, is less familiar than the bondage Black people knew. Yet during the seventeenth century the Native American Nations of the coastal region of the colonies had been destroyed, their warriors slain, their women and children sold into plantation slavery. Native American slavery had been a highly important source of labor, and the trade in Native American slaves a major branch of commerce.<sup>19</sup> Those of the Native American remnants who escaped slavery fared little better. They became the English-speaking, morally decaying "Parchcorn Indians," usually unemployed surplus labor who begged on the outskirts of the plantations.<sup>20</sup> Whether to escape slavery or degradation, some of the remnant, like the Black fugitives, fled to the foothills, and found themselves a people once again.

Regarding Mustees or Mestizos: As early as the early eighteenth century there was a considerable non-Native-American ancestry among the Native Americans. Among the well-known were John Brown, a "half-breed" chief of one of the Chickasaw war settlements, Princess Mary Consponaheso of the Creek Nation, British-Educated, daughter of



one and wife of another Briton, Alexander McGillivray, educated at Charleston and Chief of the Creek Nation, and the Cherokee son of a wealthy merchant, Richard Peavis, who held title to 144 square miles of land in the Carolina back country and cast his lot with the Loyalists during the American Revolution. Other leading Cherokee families were the Doughertys, Galpins, and Adairs with Irish ancestry, the Rosses, Vanns and McIntoshes of Scottish ancestry, and the Waffords of English ancestry.<sup>21</sup> Besides these notables, there was a much larger number of the children of rank-and-file Native Americans and poor British or African Americans.<sup>22</sup> The ratio of non-Native-American fur traders and assistants to Native American hunters in the Native American territories was sometimes as high as 75 to 300!<sup>23</sup> Mestizos of wealthy white parentage were probably set up as planters or merchants in the West. Those whose Native American relatives were prominent were likely to remain with their Nation. But the mestizos whose parents were ordinary tribesmen and poor British or African Americans<sup>24</sup> were the likely source of the back country mestizos. Before the gathering of this community they were already persons of two cultures, or a new culture.

Besides African Americans and Indians, the third racial and ethnic component of the community, poor whites of indentured servant origin, were a people whose existence is often mentioned, but whose condition is rarely described. Between one-half and two thirds of all Europeans who came to the colonies south of New England came as indentured servants.<sup>25</sup> During their term of servitude they were considered personal property,<sup>26</sup> shipped and marched in an organized branch of commerce similar to the African slave trade,<sup>27</sup> subject to sale and purchase like any other property, and liable to feel the lash of their owner.<sup>28</sup> He who imported an indentured servant received a grant of land from the colony, but usually the indentured servant received none upon the expiration of his term. South Carolina offered a land grant to freed servants after 1730, but this was because she lacked Europeans compared to other colonies. The effort helped little. Maryland and Pennsylvania ended their offers of land after 1683, and North Carolina after 1715. New York and Virginia never offered land to the terminated servant.<sup>29</sup>

A large proportion of indentured servants, rather than having volunteered in exchange for passage, were sentenced by the British courts to transportation to the plantations. Some had committed significant crimes. Very many had committed what today would be considered the pettiest of felonies, and with mitigating circumstances (starvation). Many were sentenced for the crimes of pauperism and vagrancy, in this era when the enclosing of fields in Britain evicted hundreds of thousands of peasants to wander the roads or beg in the

cities. At least 30,000 transported felons reached the colonies in the eighteenth century alone, and this does not include those sentenced as paupers or vagrants.<sup>30</sup> With the unleashing of English terror upon conquered Ireland, the Catholic Irish were a particular target for transportation. At least 10,000 Irish were sentenced as felons in the eighteenth century besides the many whose poverty was their crime. The desperation of the Irish indentured servants was compounded by the wrecking of their country,<sup>31</sup> and the outlawing of their Church in America. Servants sentenced to the plantations by the English courts became the largest element of Europeans in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia, to the point that these two may fairly be called penal colonies in respect to population.<sup>32</sup>

The terms of the sentences to plantation labor were seven years or fourteen years, in those times one-third to two-thirds of adult life expectancy. If a servant escaped and was recaptured, his term was doubled for that amount of time in most colonies; in South Carolina and Maryland it was multiplied sevenfold.<sup>33</sup>

Suicides were common. Revolts occurred. There was a wide-spread fear among planters that indentured servants and chattel slaves would join in common struggle. Many servants escaped, and few were recaptured.<sup>34</sup> It is estimated that of every eight indentured servants who finished their term of servitude, one obtained land, one set himself up as a craftsman, and six disappeared into the unknown. It is believed that some returned to the British Isles.<sup>35</sup> It is certain, from the present study, that some fled from plantation society into the western wilderness.

There are reports of escaped indentured servants and other Poor White fugitives in process of finding or helping to found the back country community. In Virginia in 1730 a back-country planter was killed by three fugitive Irish lest he inform.<sup>36</sup> In the 1740s poor whites were noted wandering, living by hunting, along the frontier in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>37</sup> In 1747 Peter Chartier, son of a Philadelphia candle-maker, became a Shawnee chief and led his part of the Nation southward along the wilderness.<sup>38</sup> About 1750 the Creek Nation in the deep South reported "strowling white people that are not employed in the Indian trade," marrying Native American wives and living off the land.<sup>39</sup> And in 1758 the first known Anglo-Saxon explorer to cross the mountains from South Carolina found an Irish settlement already there: Most had been there twenty years, a few forty to fifty, and one for sixty years. He had crossed the mountains in 1698 and remained!<sup>40</sup>

Black, Native American and Poor White: the motive, freedom, and the method, escape, are clear and documented for each component of the back country community.



Fraternization between the three enslaved peoples did not begin on the frontier. They labored together on the same plantations, and as said by a sociologist of yore, no friend to any of them, they became "bound together by a fellowship of toil."<sup>41</sup> The fellowship at times grew into joint plans for escape, at other times into love between man and woman. Marriages between the ethnic groups were still legal down to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and were not uncommon among the enslaved.<sup>42</sup> But love or fraternity among the ethnic groups in slavery was conditional upon mutual aid. About 1750 a mestizo, son of a Native American and a white, came down from the Cherokee Nation to plantation country and guided six enslaved African American to wilderness freedom. The planters said with fear, "As he is a subtil Fellow, he may have like Influence on many slaves in South Carolina."<sup>43</sup> That such aid among the three peoples had been common is evidence by the ancestral composition of the maroon community of interior South Carolina, and its standing firm and united when the white whirlwind descended.

But when and where did these thousands of the back country gather, organize, and develop their culture? Some fugitives escaped to the South Carolina interior directly west from the coastal plantations of that Colony. Most of these maroons however came from the north, from the colonies of the upper South, according to the contemporary reports,<sup>44</sup> which are substantiated by the conditions for travel at that time.

It has been shown recently that the Southern frontier did not move so much from east to west as from north to south. The back country of the more northern colonies was settled before that of the deeper South. As time passed it was necessary for pioneers to travel farther and farther south to find still unsettled lands. The route from north to south extended along the eastern edge of the Appalachian Mountain barrier. For planter and farmer pioneers with their equipment and supplies, a Great Wagon Road was gradually built, segment by segment, decade by decade and few Anglo-Saxon pioneers cared to travel beyond the point at which the Wagon Road terminated at their time of settling.<sup>45</sup>

But fugitives and established maroons, hunters and trappers, did not require wagons or a Wagon Road; nor, for their freedom's sake, were they likely to use it when it was nearby.

The same route was available to them, before the extension of the Road. As with most American highways, the Great Wagon Road was preceded by Native American 'trails,' roads adequate for travel afoot or horseback, and reasonably safe for fugitives and maroons: few planters or their kind were likely to be upon such a trail. Before the Wagon Road, there were the Great Warrior's Path from Pennsylvania and

Maryland into the back country of Virginia, the Occaneechi Path between the back countries of Virginia and North Carolina, and the Cherokee Trading Path on into the back country of South Carolina.<sup>46</sup>

Why did escaped slaves and servants not seek refuge in the Great Dismal Swamp or other smaller swamps of the east coast, rather than taking the Native American roads of the west? Some of those who escaped from plantations of the coastal upper South did enter the Swamp. But for fugitives of the interior plantations, the journey may often have seemed more secure westward through the thinning population of the colonies, rather than eastward through the most populous and best organized counties. Then too, by the 1730s or 1740s, the smaller swamp communities if there were such, and even the Dismal Swamp may have become crowded: Saturated sanctuaries, in the sense of islands already occupied with homes and farms, game in danger of exhaustion, and a population too large for optimum invisibility and security.

Fugitives of Maryland and Virginia, having fled into the western wilderness of these colonies, encountering other fugitives and settling down together, were likely to remain in their now familiar home territory until the Wagon Road and planter pioneers drew near. And then the only reasonable direction for their migration to still untroubled land was south. The crossing of the mountains was too difficult for general use by families and communities. That there were maroon settlements in the back country of the colonies before the great South Carolina maroon concentration of the 1760s is indicated not only by South Carolina maroon contact at that time with settlements still in the upper South, but also by reports from earlier periods. In 1721 the North Carolina authorities took note of fugitives gathering in the unsettled portion of that colony. Virginia in 1748 and North Carolina in 1755 enacted their vagrancy laws. In 1752 there was the first official notice of mixed Indian, African and white fugitives in the South Carolina back country. And in 1756 a maroon fort was discovered near Wachovia, North Carolina.<sup>47</sup>

Except for small settlements in scattered spots that remained wilderness after the surrounding land became plantation country, the maroons to remain free must have moved on at each stage of the advance of the Southern Anglo-Saxon frontier. There is no other way by which they could have gathered from the north in such numbers in South Carolina during the 1760s. Hardly an individual fugitive, much less organized maroon bands, would have considered stealing their way down through all the coastal plantation lands of the Southern colonies, and then making their way across the breadth of the South Carolina plantation country. And surely such a rash effort, by any sizable



number of persons, would have been recorded. But there would be no outsiders to note the alternative route actually used: the fugitives of each colony making their way west, and then, moving south, coalescing into a single people. If fugitives sought the central wilderness of small Caribbean islands, would not the vastness of interior North America have beckoned the oppressed?

From the need of the maroons to move ahead of the Anglo-Saxon frontier, and the dates of the construction of the Great Wagon Road and the advance of the planter settlement, a rough chronology of the southward maroon migration may be constructed.

The great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania and Maryland reached the back country of Virginia in the 1740s, of North Carolina in the 1750s, and of South Carolina in the 1760s. The first planter and farmer pioneers entered the back country of Maryland and Virginia in the 1730s, and these regions were well settled in the 1740s. About 1750 the first planter and farmer pioneers entered the North Carolina back country, and during the 1760s the occupation of this region was well under way. And after an abortive effort before the Cherokee War, the planter settlement of back-country South Carolina rapidly developed in the 1760s.

Therefore it may be taken that the maroon exodus from back-country Maryland and Virginia began in the 1730s. The prior decade had probably seen a considerable maroon population in these regions, what with indentured servitude and Indian slavery still important sources of plantation labor, to which at this time was added the newly burgeoning enslavement of Black people.

With the more northerly maroons entering North Carolina in the 1730s, and joining themselves to local maroons, the 1740s and early 1750s would have been the time when the North Carolina back country was the center of maroon population.

Then, as we know, in the late 1750s and 1760s the great migration entered the back country of South Carolina, again joining to itself its local brethren, and for a time this land was the heartland of maroon society.

It is reasonable to suppose that large numbers of maroons could not settle in Native American territory and maintain their government and society without consent of the Native American nation. This supposition is supported by evidence already cited. At the beginning of the 1750s a mestizo (English-speaking) came down from the Cherokee Nation into South Carolina to encourage escapes, to the great concern of the colonial authorities.<sup>1</sup> At about the same time, quite possibly directly related, a conference was held in the Nation between Cherokee and Black maroon leaders towards a possible alliance against the

common enemy. From this information it would appear that maroons began to move into the back country of the lower South during the 1750s with the consent of the Cherokee Nation. But with the fall and exile of that nation in 1761, the maroon confederacy was left without its ally.<sup>48</sup>

Of course escapes from slavery did not end in the north because most maroons had migrated to the south. It seems reasonable that escaped slaves would continue to make for the receding free territory and settlements of sanctuary. Directions would be simple: Head for the setting sun, and when you reach the mountains, do not climb them, but turn so they are at your right hand. Follow the mountains, and the road with wagons, but do not walk on that road. And when the road ends, ask the first dark-skinned hunter you meet where the settlements are.

Surely such instructions were given fugitives, by those maroon settlements that remained behind, such as that of the Dismal Swamp, hidden in the plantation country. These maroons would have been moved, not only by fellow-feeling, but also by the concern lest their constricted hiding place become too crowded for the support of life and the security of members. This may have been the origin of a network and tradition of aid to the fugitive, overnight care, directions, sometimes a guide, which a century later would become known as the Underground Railroad, when at last free white persons joined the old endeavor. By the 1760s it is doubtful that escaped slaves of Maryland or northern Virginia any more sought the main maroon territory, now far away in South Carolina, and after that decade the escape route in the upper South must have led north, not south, the North Star replacing the mountains at the right hand as the guiding sign.

The massive southward migration was of some fifty years' duration, and five hundred miles in distance. Children were born, and lived to grow up, undoubtedly in large part due to the teeming wealth of wild game for food that filled the Piedmont in that century. Perhaps by the late 1760s the majority of maroons had been born in the wilderness, judging from the great size of the maroon population, and a widespread ignorance of Anglo-Saxon ways greater than that of any field hand in even the largest and most isolated of slave quarters. By 1740 or 1750 there would have been a young adult generation born among the maroons, and by the end of the 1760s a middle-aged generation born in the maroon community, and a second generation of young adults. It would have been these native-born maroons, rather than fugitive newcomers, who created the distinctive maroon culture.

Though unrecognized at the time, 1761 was a crisis year for the maroons. The defeat of the Cherokees opened up the South Carolina back country to massive Anglo-Saxon settlement. An inflation of



northern land prices sent more of these settlers south. And the Great Wagon Road was extended to the Carolina back country.<sup>49</sup> During the next few years between 20,000 and 35,000 Anglo-Saxon settlers poured into the South Carolina back country,<sup>50</sup> outnumbering the maroons, perhaps by two or three to one. Yet the maroons stood and fought a long and major frontier war, instead of moving on as had been their practice when each prior territory had become open to white settlement.

The maroons had reached the end of their southward trail. Probably they had counted on Spanish Florida as one more sanctuary, if needed. Possibly, in legendary form, they knew something of the history of the welcome given to fugitives from slavery by the Spanish since 1680, the maroon settlements long established in Florida, and the many wars between the Spanish, Native American and maroon allies of Florida, and the Carolina planters, which had culminated with the bloody Stono slave insurrection of 1739 in South Carolina.<sup>51</sup> But in 1763, just four years before the Maroon War, Spain had ceded Florida to England. That land no longer seemed the extraordinary resource for fugitives from English colonial slavery that it had been so long. Moreover, the cession of Florida, shocking to Native Americans as well as Black people, must have weakened the militant party among the Native Americans who had supported the alliance with Spanish and Blacks, and encouraged a conservative policy among the chiefs of the Muskogean Nations. Further migration south, or west where the Muskogean Nations stood, was a dubious prospect at this time of sudden diplomatic shifting of power. It is more likely than not that this hitherto unencountered situation was discussed by the maroon confederation just before 1767, and with no secure place to go, the decision made to stand and fight. This lack of secure paths farther along the continent is probably also another cause of such a heavy concentration of maroon population in the relatively small region of the South Carolina back country during the 1760s.

Now maroons and new settlers faced one another. Never were two peoples more fated to clash. The Anglo-Saxon pioneers intended to build from the wilderness a new plantation country like that of the coast. The historian of these settlers says:

They were ambitious Back Country property holders determined to end lawlessness, to discipline the lower people and to establish an orderly society . . . The movement was also an attempt to establish the values and the substance of a property holders' society in the Back Country.<sup>52</sup>

This purpose was not unrealistic: a generation later a high proportion of the leading pioneers were to be the slave-owning elite of interior South Carolina.<sup>53</sup>

But now maroons, the most implacable foes of slavery, stood in their way. Race confronted race. Cultural values and institutions were not only incompatible, but mutually incomprehensible. Would-be planters hankered to reduce these maroons to their 'natural' status as servants, especially in view of the frontier's labor shortage. Maroons, dependent on hunting and trapping for their living, could only disdain title deeds, fences and livestock brands, the foundations of the intended agricultural settlement.<sup>54</sup>

Though planter pioneers outnumbered maroons, the impending conflict would not be utterly uneven, for the former were unable to enlist the aid of the South Carolina government. Local government for the back country, long overdue, had not been established, neither county lines, county seats, sheriffs, constables nor courts. The colonial government failed to act to provide these, despite massive petitions repeated over many years, mass meetings, delegations, lobbies and threats to march upon Charleston.<sup>55</sup> The two colonial governmental institutions that did exist in the back country, the Justices of the Peace and the militia, were useless for the purposes of the planter pioneers. The J.P.'s had little power, and they and the officers of militia were unreliable, some better acquainted with the maroons than with the planter pioneers, as likely to oppose the planter pioneers in the name of due process of law and the colonial government, as to aid them in any direct, speedy destruction of the maroon community. Distance and the lack of roads ruled out effective use of the Charleston courts for the judging of back-country cases.<sup>56</sup> Moreover the Royal Governor was openly unsympathetic with the planter pioneers' purpose to destroy maroon power, whether from ignorance, stupidity, a concern to preserve the wilderness for the fur trade, or some deep, long-term strategy for a balance of power among Carolina's classes and castes.<sup>57</sup> The spokesmen for the planter pioneers at the seat of government were too few to provide much help. Nor did the Colonial Assembly of coastal planters and their friends act on behalf of their back-country cousins. Perhaps they feared a loss of land values upon the opening of a new plantation region. Perhaps there is truth in the charge against them of general lethargy. Certainly the Assemblymen, like the coastal population in general, were abysmally ignorant of the social scene in the back country of their Colony.<sup>58</sup>

Thus a lack of unity among the governing elements of Carolina gave the maroons a fighting chance for survival, and forced the planter pioneers to organize their own movement and irregular militia, which



they first named "The Mob" and then more elegantly "The Regulators."<sup>59</sup>

Sporadic physical conflicts between planter pioneers and maroons had occurred since the early contact, and increased in frequency:<sup>60</sup> maroons took livestock found in the woods, branded or not, tore down fences in their way, refused to move from deeded land, welcomed newly escaped slaves to their settlements.<sup>61</sup> Planter pioneers captured maroons, whether or not their own former slaves, and flogged them to force them to submit. The first detailed clashes are reported from the year before the Maroon War. An armed maroon band raided a plantation, and tortured the planter to extract information on concealed property. They may have justified torture under the law of eye for eye and tooth for tooth, viewing planter floggings of their brothers as a form of torture rather than a mode of civilizing and disciplining. Another planter charged a maroon with the theft of his horse, and shot him dead. Maroons found two Justices of the Peace who were willing to swear out a warrant for murder against the planter. But one of the several Charleston friends of the planter pioneers, Charles Shinner, the Chief Justice of South Carolina, was in the vicinity and roused a planter mob, which secured the withdrawal of the warrant by thrashing one Justice of the Peace and threatening the other. There soon followed another fight between a planter pioneer and a maroon, and this time it was the planter who died. Then, on a return visit to the back country, Chief Justice Shinner sought again to raise a mob, to attack the maroon band who had dared to seek legal redress for their slain member. But the planter pioneers who had intimidated the Justices of the Peace were not willing at this time to face an armed company of maroons. As Shinner continued on his travels, the maroon band tried to ambush him along the trail. This was the war band commanded by Captain Govey Black, who seems to have been the leading officer of maroons during this earlier period of the Carolina maroon concentration. He had been captured by planter pioneers back in 1764 and sent to Charleston for trial, but the charge had proven improper or the evidence insufficient.<sup>62</sup>

In the year following these several clashes and two fatalities, 1767, the Maroon War began, with concerted attacks upon maroon settlements by the planter pioneers. Later they stated that these were in reprisal for the events of 1766, but for four months there had been no reported clash, or maroon action against planter or plantation. The true precipitant of the War was more likely the rage and frustration of the planter pioneers when the new Governor of the Colony, Charles Montague, celebrated his inauguration by pardoning five prisoners from the Charleston Jail, and these were maroons, brought down from the back country at great trouble and cost to the planter pioneers.<sup>63</sup>

The armed conflicts that now broke out, between April 1767 and March 1769, merit the name Maroon War in duration, the hundreds of combatants in both armies, and the "many battles" and "many killed on both sides."<sup>64</sup> There are specific reports of sixteen to eighteen planter soldiers and twenty-two maroon warriors killed. Other deaths are probably unreported. Casualties besides fatalities were in the hundreds.<sup>65</sup>

Through the Spring and Summer organized bands of the planter pioneers sought out settlements on which maroon war bands were based, surrounded them, preferably in the absence of the men, launched their attack, burned down the settlements, and carried off the livestock, other goods, and the maroon women. Each captured maroon believed to be directly involved in acts against the Anglo-Saxon settlement was flogged.

The maroon war bands fought back. They raided plantations and plantation village centers, burning the buildings and taking off the movable property. There are accusations again of the maroon use of torture to extract information. They used heated irons,<sup>66</sup> and the question arises whether, with bloody humor, they associated their atrocities with the planters' veneration of brand marks as a sign of private property. Two rapes by maroons are also alleged, one upon a small girl, though not fatal. Whether any of the maroon women captured into bondage were also raped is not reported from the exclusively planter pioneer sources. There are other accusations of rape by maroons, but these turn out to refer to maroon marriages' not being celebrated by the Anglican or Presbyterian wedding ceremony, or to the seemingly widespread elopement of the daughters of the planter pioneers with young maroons.<sup>67</sup>

During this period of the War, the Church of England missionary to the frontier was ambushed by a maroon band, but instead of being harmed, was invited to preach at their settlement. He kept the appointment, not to preach, but to guide a planter pioneer band, who took the settlement and captured a number of maroon children and "whores," as they were wont to call the women of the maroons.<sup>68</sup>

At this time one planter was unwise enough, on encountering a band of dark-skinned horsemen to demand to see their passes, as if they were slaves. They shot him dead. Also ill-advised was the Governor of North Carolina's choice of this time to make a trip into South Carolina. He and his party narrowly escaped capture by a maroon war band. Another war band raided far beyond the back country, deep into the old established plantation land, with the result of many slaves freed to join their brethren.<sup>69</sup> Not counting the engagements that must have accompanied some of the planter raids on maroon settlements, there



were this year four running battles on horseback, as well as nine maroon raids upon plantations or villages.<sup>70</sup>

In the Fall of the first year of the War, a number of the settlements of the maroon war bands having been destroyed, the planter pioneer companies turned to the destruction of civilian maroon settlements, whose people were neither armed nor organized for battle.<sup>71</sup> The campaign of flogging was now applied to them, for their crimes or sins of idleness and vagrancy, their refusal to enter into the service of their betters. At this time the organized planter pioneers also began to demand oaths of obedience from the Justices of the Peace and officers of the militia; as a group these were suspected of neutrality between maroons and planters, and loyalty to the Colonial Government rather than to the Anglo-Saxon back-country settlement, or even of sympathy with the maroons. If they refused the oath, they were flogged and banished.<sup>72</sup> Some of the officials who did not willingly support the planter pioneer attack upon the maroons may simply have been unusually loyal to King, Colony, and Law. But some it seems were very early settlers of the back country before significant Anglo-Saxon settlement, who could thus have become acquainted with maroons in happier times upon the frontier. Then too, some may have been socially related to the maroon community, though presumably light, or lighter skinned members of that people. At that time the planter pioneers often lumped such officials in with the maroons proper, calling them all "The Rogues," their term for the outcast people.<sup>73</sup>

By the end of 1767 Charleston was becoming dimly aware of the character of the back-country War, and efforts began in the Colonial Assembly to aid the planter pioneers. Only one effort succeeded at this time. Two Ranger companies had been authorized, Royal troops with the right to cross the boundary lines of the Colonies, and the friends of the back-country planters managed to attach the names of planter pioneer leaders as officers of these companies.<sup>74</sup> The planter pioneers acted swiftly to organize their Ranger companies; their purpose was to seek and destroy the war band of Captain Govey Black. His band was singled out, probably as a band that had not retreated into hiding, or into relative inactivity,<sup>75</sup> a potential rallying-point for a new maroon offensive, based on Captain Black's skill or charisma. The planter pioneers gave seven instructions to their youth in the ranger companies: to take the armed maroons alive if possible, but if (!) they resisted to "treat them as Rebels-Outlaws, and an abandon'd crew," that is, to hang them without trial; to refrain from adultery, fornication, rape, gambling, drunkenness, or fighting among themselves; to distinguish between the maroons' own women, and women seduced from 'respectable' families (what is to follow this distinction, once made, is

not stated); to separate all children from their parents; to deprive elderly non-combatants of their land and dwellings; to behave as public servants, not a lawless mob; and to refrain from plundering legitimate farmers along the way.<sup>76</sup>

The pursuit of Govey Black's band, a series of chases, searches and running battles, lasted three months during the winter of 1767-68. The pursuit covered much of the South: from South Carolina into Georgia, then back through South Carolina into North Carolina and on into Virginia, then back again into North Carolina. At last the band was cut off, and those still in the field hanged without trial: Captain Black and fifteen of his men. The Rangers had found time to raid maroon settlements as they pursued Captain Black, for their brought back to their home much plunder, horses, escaped slaves, and women. Of thirteen maroon prisoners turned over to the courts at Charleston, ten were found not guilty of any legal crime and released. During the three months pursuit the planter pioneer horsemen were perceived by observers as vigilante irregulars not Royal Rangers,<sup>77</sup> and no more is heard of Ranger companies officered by planter pioneers.

With Govey Black's band destroyed and whatever general leadership he may have held with the maroons, the armed planter pioneers proceeded to the final solution of the maroon problem. Meeting in conventions, they put their demands and purposes in print. Their *Remonstrance* to the Colonial government, besides the establishment of local government, demanded stronger laws against the misappropriation of strayed animals, legislation against idleness, vice, vagrancy and indolence, and a stronger poor law under which paupers and vagabonds, not identified as slaves, would be sold to planters as convict labor.<sup>78</sup> Pending the surrender of Charleston to their demands, they published their Plan of Regulation. It had but two parts: the forbidding of any Royal Colonial authority from entering the back country, on pain of lash or bullet, and the disciplining of the maroons into conformity with the rules of plantation society by means of the lash. The maroons were referred to as "refuse . . . insolent licentious . . . abandoned wretches . . . vermin."<sup>79</sup>

The lash, so central to the civilizing program of the planters pioneers, had developed from its use in heated, drunken mob anger, to a systematic, programmatic application in cool hate and ambition. A thick bundle of long hickory switches was the prescribed instrument. Five hundred lashes were the official measure for each maroon. For each victim it took one hour to accomplish. Of course no human being could stand such punishment to the muscles of the arm, and so the floggers were in teams of ten men, working in relays. During these exercises a drum was beat, and fiddles played with lively airs, for the



added amusement of the Anglo-Saxon pioneers. Women as well as men were sometimes flogged, probably those believed to be directly connected with actions against the planters, but the regular punishment for maroon women was half-drowning, bound to the ducking stool, or "exposure," whatever this term may mean.<sup>80</sup>

In these ways was 1768 spent by the planter pioneers, apart from the necessity of sowing and reaping a crop. The clearing of more land, the preparation of new fields, the construction of permanent homes, could wait. For "The Plan of Regulation" was the more basic and prior step in the winning of the West.

To the merry planters with their fiddlers, this consolidation of power must have seemed the end of the Maroon War. They were wrong: they underestimated the doggedness of the Royal Governor, and they misunderstood the nature of guerrilla warriors, whose disappearance after a defeat does not mean dissolution, but regroupment. In that summer of mass torment a deputy of the Provost Marshal's Office proceeded from Charleston to the back country to serve writs upon the planter pioneer leaders for their bloody work. On his journey in the back country, he was seized by a planter pioneer band, disarmed and manhandled. A nearby Justice of the Peace and militia Captain, hearing of this, found twelve of his company willing to stand up with him, and set forth to protest the harassment of the King's representative. The planter pioneers attacked the militia, killed one, captured the rest, and flogged several. One planter had been wounded, and the militia were all threatened with death if he should die. When this news reached Charleston, Roger Pinckney, the Provost Marshal of South Carolina (the highest law officer) set off for the back country with forty militiamen. He was met by three hundred armed planter pioneers, who threatened him with bodily harm unless he departed posthaste; and he did.<sup>81</sup>

Six months later the Governor found the means to retaliate. Another Justice of the Peace, John Musgrove, had been flogged twice by the planter pioneers, and after the second had fled to Charleston. He presented himself to Montague as one loyal to the King's law; he was also, as later events attest, one who identified with the maroon community. The Governor took Musgrove before his Council; Musgrove told his story, and presented the names of twenty-five leaders of the planter pioneers. Then the Governor-in-Council removed the names of members of the planter pioneer organization from the lists of Justices of the Peace and militia officers, and secretly, to bypass the Assembly which was becoming friendly to the back country planter cause, obtained a bench warrant from a Charleston court for the arrest of the planter pioneer leaders.<sup>82</sup>

But who would bell the cat? The Provost Marshall himself had been unable to serve a warrant. A candidate was found. He met the qualifications for the job of process server to the back country. He possessed the unquestionable will to act against the planter pioneers, and the strength to carry out the intention. Beyond these the Governor was in no position to be critical of the character of the agent he appointed. Respectable folk were not likely to be crowding around for this appointment.

The man appointed was named Joseph Scofell, a rough back-countryman, an illiterate whose name was variously spelled Scofell, Scofel, Scovil, Coffell, and Cofell. He may have been one of those who kept a foot in each community, the Anglo-Saxon and the maroon but it is more likely that his basic social identification was with the maroons, judging from his background and the way in which he was to choose to carry out his mandate. In his youth he had been a "roamer," one of the back-country "vagabond" element. Early and late his reputation had been that of an outlaw, a raider of plantations for cattle. Once, when accused of taking off forth chickens, Scofell had protested: "It was a dom'd lie, there was only sax and thirty, for I et the guzzards!"<sup>83</sup>

Armed with their warrants, Scofell, and Musgrove appointed as his assistant, appeared in the back country. They assumed the titles of Colonel and Major and began to recruit a military force. It is said that Scofell rallied to himself the maroon war bands that had dispersed into hiding, some into the wilderness beyond the frontier. Other reports agree that his recruits were of the maroon people.<sup>84</sup> Eventually his command numbered six hundred soldiers or more. They fought a number of engagements with the planter pioneer bands; in one a leader of the planter pioneer organization was captured; in another battle, efforts to free the planter leader resulted in the capture of eight others by Scofell's men; and in another engagement, a raiding detachment commanded by Musgrove was surrounded by the planter forces, but broke through to, or were rescued by, Colonel Scofell and the main maroon force.<sup>85</sup>

In February and March of 1769 the six hundred maroons under their commander moved through the Carolina back country, raiding plantations, confiscating livestock and provisions, imprisoning planters and their families, and dividing the plantation lands among the laborers who yesterday had been slaves and victims of the lash.<sup>86</sup>

By March the planters had rallied from their shock and joined their companies into a small army of like size to Scofell's. They feinted for position, and on March 26 met face to face on the banks of the Saluda River. Both were resolved on battle. As the battle opened with a



preliminary skirmish in which three planter pioneers were killed, messengers of the Governor rode up, announcing the withdrawal of Scofell's appointment, and the Governor's command that his representatives should mediate.

An armistice was declared, and an agreement reached. Both armies agreed to disband and disperse. The planter pioneers agreed to dissolve their organization "The Regulators" and henceforth to be subject to Carolina law. It was probably also understood that the maroons, civilian and military, would migrate from the South Carolina back country beyond the frontier to the west and south, for this they did.<sup>87</sup> The Maroon War was over.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Woodmason, "Journal, June 1768 (year-end report)," in Richard T. Hooker, ed., *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), pp. 43-44. The papers of Charles Woodmason, the Church of England circuit-rider missionary to the South Carolina back country in the 1760s, are the key to South Carolina maroon history. They were discovered, following the Second World War, at a London auction, and were edited by Hooker under the above title. The papers consist of Woodmason's journal, political sermons and various notes, as well as copies of some of the publications of the Regulators, the backcountry planter pioneers who fought against the maroons. These papers are most helpful in amplifying the otherwise often sketchy sources for the war of the Regulators against the Charleston government and against the maroons. They are practically the only detailed source for the history of the maroons of this time and place. Strangely, the maroons permitted Woodmason to travel freely among their settlements, though he was an agent and a leader of their enemies. In his writings Woodmason's bias against the origins, activities and way of life of the maroons is so ferocious that it is usually easy to separate the hate-filled rhetoric from the phenomena observed and reported, and thus to construct a history of the maroons.

✓ <sup>2</sup> Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 136. In this work Richard Maxwell Brown has written the definitive description of the social

status, values and activities of the Carolina backcountry planter pioneers, who were the Regulators. He is also the first historian clearly to identify the backcountry enemies of the Regulators as 'colored,' that is, persons of African, Indian and poor white ancestry (p. 28). It is not the purpose of his work, however, to write their history, or to place them in the context of ethnic history. To the contrary, the purpose of his work is to illustrate the need by men of property for law and order on the frontier, and the means by which they achieved it.

<sup>3</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 221, 226.

<sup>4</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Letter Sent to John R. Rutledge, 1769," *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>5</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, Sunday, September 21, 1766," *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1767; January 1, August 16, 1768, in *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 31-32, 56; Charles Woodmason, "Sermon on the Baptists and the Presbyterians, Conaree River, South Carolina, ca. 1768," *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> "South Carolina Gazette, July 25, 1768," *Ibid.*, August 15, 1768, in Alexander Gregg, ed., *History of the Old Cheraws, 1730 to 1810* (New York: Richardson and Co., 1867), pp. 139, 145. This work is a selection of documents, interspersed with the editor's own narrative.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, July 25, 1768, in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1771, p. 194; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 29, 31.

<sup>11</sup> John Hope Franklin discusses the number of permanent slaves escapes in *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 260.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), pp. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina, 1729-1765* (Kingport, Tenn.: Southern Publishers, 1940), p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> James Nesmith, "Deposition, Augusta, October 12, 1750," in William L. McDowell, Jr., ed., *Colonial Records of South Carolina. Documents Relating to Indian Affairs. May 21, 1750-August 7, 1754* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier, 1754-1775* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1944), p. 233.



<sup>16</sup> Richard Smith, "Deposition Before Governor and Council, South Carolina, July 12, 1751," in McDowell, *Colonial Records of South Carolina*, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> John Buckles, "Journal, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, May 1752–May 1753," *Ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>18</sup> George Milligen, "A Short Description of the Province of South Carolina . . . 1763," in Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina* (New York: Harper, 1846), p. 480; Alden, *John Stuart*, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670–1732* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1929), pp. 23, 71–95, 171, 187.

<sup>20</sup> John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina* (Charleston, S.C.: S.G. Courtenay, 1859), p. 303.

<sup>21</sup> Alden, *John Stuart*, pp. 92, 299; Logan, *Upper Country*, pp. 176, 299; Edward Byron Reuter, *The Mulatto in the United States* (Boston: Richard G. Badher, The Gorham Press, 1918), p. 84n.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Bosomworth, Creek Agent, "Journal, Coweta Town, Creek Nation, July–October, 1752," in McDowell, *Colonial Records of South Carolina*, p. 306; Alden, *John Stuart*, p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>24</sup> Reuter, *Mulatto in the United States*, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> Abbott Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage. White Servitude and Convict Labor in America. 1607–1776* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 336.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 278–79.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209–11, 221–22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 238–40.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 171–73.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 267.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253, 260–62, 264, 269.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299–300.

<sup>36</sup> Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 137.

<sup>37</sup> Meriwether, *Expansion of South Carolina*, p. 120.

<sup>38</sup> Alden, *John Stuart*, p. 12.

- <sup>39</sup> Bosomworth, "Journal," p. 306.
- <sup>40</sup> Logan, *Upper Country*, p. 168.
- <sup>41</sup> Reuter, *Mulatto in the United States*, p. 150.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130; Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, p. 115.
- <sup>43</sup> Edmund Gray, "Letter to John Fallowfield, South Carolina, May 15, 1751," in McDowell, *Colonial Records of South Carolina*, p. 83.
- <sup>44</sup> "South Carolina Gazette, August 15, 1768," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 144; South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 299; *Ibid.*, "Letter Sent to John R. Rutledge," *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- <sup>45</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, pp. 123, 130.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130; Crane, *Southern Frontier*, pp. 23, 40; Logan, *Upper Country*, p. 12.
- <sup>47</sup> Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956–1960), vol. 10) p. 505; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 13, 48; James Francis, "Letter to Governor James Glen, April 14, 1752," in McDowell, *Colonial Records of South Carolina*, p. 251.
- <sup>48</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, pp. 123, 127, 130; Gipson, *British Empire*, p. 505.
- <sup>49</sup> Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (London: Alexander Donaldson, 1779), vol. 1, p. 274; Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, p. 129. For Native American consent, see notes 16 and 43 above.
- <sup>50</sup> Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 42; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. xxiv; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 13, 18, 113.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63; Crane, *Southern Frontier*, pp. 11n, 31, 34, 208, 239–41, 258; Hewatt, *Historical Account*, p. 333; South Carolina, *The Statutes at large of South Carolina by David J. McCord. Acts Relating to Charleston, Courts, Slaves and Rivers* (Columbia, S.C.: A.S. Johnson, 1840), vol. 7, pp. 413–14; Gipson, *British Empire*, vol. 9; pp. 178–79.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135. This is corroborated by Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 128, and the "South Carolina Gazette, August 15, 1768," in the same collection, p. 144.
- <sup>53</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 25, 115.
- <sup>54</sup> For the maroon culture, see Chapter 16, notes 4–49.
- <sup>55</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Royal Council, "Proceedings, March 16, 1752: in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 131; South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance Presented to the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina by the Upper Inhabitants of the Said Province, 1767," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 230–33; Woodmason, "Letter Accompanying the Remonstrance and Other Regulator Documents, to the Palace of the



Bishop of London, St. Marks Parish, South Carolina, March 26, 1771," *Ibid.*, p. 191; Woodmason, "Notes on the South Carolina Regulator Remonstrance, South Carolina [date unknown]," *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 179; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 39, 41, 64.

<sup>56</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," pp. 215–16, 218; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 14.

<sup>57</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Royal Council, "Proceedings, October 5, 1767" in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 135; South Carolina (Colony), Commons House of Assembly and Royal Council, Joint Session, Proceedings, November 5, 1767," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 136; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 171–72; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Woodmason, "Journal, August 30, 1767 (year-end report)," and "Notes on Remonstrance," both in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 169, 172.

<sup>59</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Royal Council, "Proceedings, October 5, 1767," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 135; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 39.

<sup>60</sup> Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance"; Charles Woodmason, "Notes on 'Advertisement: To Be Disposed of . . . Fifty Thousand Prime Slaves,'" both in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 213, 228, 257; also *Ibid.*, p. 173n.

<sup>62</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Commons House of Assembly, *Journal January 8, 1765–August 9, 1765* (Columbia: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1949), p. 173; Woodmason, "Journal, October 29, 1766, December 26, 1766," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 9–10, 11; Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 138.

<sup>63</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," p. 234; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 38, 134.

<sup>64</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," p. 234.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235; South Carolina Regulators (broadsheet), "Advertisement: To Be Disposed of," p. 257; Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," p. 235; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>66</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," p. 235.

<sup>67</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Advertisement: To Be Disposed of," p. 257.

<sup>68</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, September 26, 1767," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 29. Woodmason was the missionary.

<sup>69</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on 'Advertisement,'" *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 35–37.

<sup>71</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, August 30, 1767 (year-end report)," inserted ca. December, 1767, in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 25, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 86, 89.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 33, 84–89; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 218n; South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 41; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup> Woodmason, "Letter Accompanying Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, "Sermon Before . . . Rangers, Swift Creek, Wateree River, South Carolina, ca. December, 1767," *Ibid.*, pp. 280–84.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279n; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 45.

<sup>78</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 230.

<sup>79</sup> "South Carolina Gazette, September 2, 1768," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 5; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 175. The text of the Plan has not survived.

<sup>80</sup> "South Carolina Gazette, September 2, 1768," p. 145; Charles Woodmason, "Sermon on Occasion of . . . Regulators' Being Put into the Commission of the Peace for Craven County . . . , St. Marks Parish, South Carolina, ca. August, 1771," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 285; Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 235; Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 138; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 174n; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 90.

<sup>81</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Royal Council, "Proceedings, August 2, 1768," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 139; G.G. Powell, "Letter to Lt. Gov. William Bull, Weymouth, South Carolina, August 19, 1768," *Ibid.*, p. 149; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 175; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 55.

<sup>82</sup> Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 183.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* The quotation is from Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 28n.

<sup>84</sup> Woodmason, "Letter Accompanying Remonstrance," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 207; *Ibid.*, p. 181; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 91.

<sup>85</sup> Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 181.

<sup>86</sup> Woodmason, "Letter Accompanying Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 242n; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 94.



## Chapter 16

### “A Mix’d Medly”: The Culture of the South Carolina Maroons And the Second Maroon War, 1775–1783

The maroon culture of the South Carolina Hills may be reconstructed in considerable detail. The principal source, Charles Woodmason the back country Anglican missionary, was so venomous in his prejudice that bias may readily be separated from the kernels of information.

Contemporary reports agree that the South Carolina maroon population was large, by the standards of the colonies, and in particular the colonial frontier. Scofell’s small army of 600 indicates conservatively a population of two or three thousand from which these soldiers assembled; but there is no suggestion that Scofell was able to locate every scattered war band; and the civilian maroon settlements greatly outnumbered the war settlements.

Woodmason, the only outsider who visited many maroon settlements, was dumbfounded at their numbers, on a frontier so recently settled. There is a good estimate, from militia records, of the back-country Anglo-Saxon population only, at 35,000.<sup>1</sup> The planter pioneer organization estimated the total back-country population, ‘decent’ and ‘low’ together, at 60,000.<sup>2</sup> This might be taken as an exaggeration, to impress the Charleston authorities with the need for local government, except that their secretary, the Church of England missionary, in his journal for private use only, stated that the estimate was too low, and suggested 100,000.<sup>3</sup>

The planter pioneer total estimate, with the 35,000 Anglo-Saxons subtracted, indicates a maroon population of 25,000. The missionary’s estimate suggests a larger population for both peoples.

Tending to substantiate such a large estimate of maroon population are the length of time it took the planters to subdue the maroons, and the apparent ability of both peoples to raise about the same number of troops assembled at one place and time.

The lack of more estimates of total population and of information on how the two estimates were made, and the unfavorable conditions on the frontier for careful observation, forbid acceptance of 25,000 as a definitive estimate of maroon population. Yet from what material is available, an estimated maroon population of 10,000 appears to be too conservative, and 20,000 not unreasonable. If figures of this magnitude seem fantastic, perhaps it is not the magnitude, but the existence of a maroon people in North America, that is difficult to grasp, for any except those who have received hints from oral tradition.

The Back Country Maroons were migratory, some perhaps as a way of life inherited from parents in the wilderness, but generally and basically due to their hunting economy and their need to avoid the representatives of the slave-holding society. Though most came of ancient agricultural traditions, settled agriculture could not be the principal economy of a fugitive people, when the frontier of their oppressors was in constant motion. Again and again the maroons are called "vagabonds" by observers from the majority. A South Carolina historian refers to the "floating element."<sup>4</sup> One of the planter pioneer petitions just before the Maroon War calls them "Itinerants and Vagabond Strollers."<sup>5</sup> The *Remonstrance* charges that "they range the country with their Horse and Gun, without Home or Habitation."<sup>6</sup> Woodmason's notes on the *Remonstrance* state that the country swarmed with vagrants, strollers preying at large, and in his journal he records that many of the 'low people' lived by hunting, and killing of deer.<sup>7</sup> He preached, to the planter pioneers, of

... Num'rous Troops of...unsettled, Profligate  
Persons of both sexes... audacious  
Vagabonds... Horse thieves, Cattle Stealers, Hog  
Stealers... Hunters...<sup>8</sup>

And he lists, as the vocations and avocations of the maroons:

... Hunting, fishing, fowling and racing... riding  
the Woods, Cattle Hunting, driving... Hogs Horses—  
Travelling to and fro... trapping...<sup>9</sup>

Before the Maroon War, in 1765, pleading for aid for the planter pioneers, Lieutenant-Governor William Bull told the Royal Council



that "Vagabonds . . . now infest and injure the industrious Settlers." After the Maroon War, in 1772, Governor James Habersham of Georgia reported the arrival in his colony of "Persons who have no settled habitation and live by hunting . . ." <sup>10</sup>

Not many skins a year were required to meet simple needs, such as a new musket, or a few tools. The price was good. The trade in deer skins was an important one. It had been South Carolina's second most important commerce in the seventeenth century, after the trade in Indian slaves. 140,000 skins had been shipped in good years; South Carolina had been a vast deer park. It was still something like that in the western hills. Persons in England continued to want deer skin for breeches, hats, and in general as a colorful and cheap substitute for leather. In the eighteenth century the trade in deer skins, though diminished, was the next industry after the new trade in the products of the slave plantations. Native Americans remote from the settled lands were the principle hunters. To white men was the prerogative of the trade itself. But in between, in the foot-hills, known to the agents of the trade but not to the trading magnets in Charleston, were the maroons. Just before the Maroon War came the maroon's most prosperous years. There was a shortage of skins, not for lack of deer, but due to new Indian regulations. <sup>11</sup> The higher prices at that time may have been a factor in bringing more maroons down from the Virginia and North Carolina back countries to augment this people in South Carolina.

But land and the private ownership of land were the economic foundations of European society in South Carolina. And these required a sedentary community. Such needs were necessarily in sharpest opposition to the foundation of maroon society, free access to the animals and woods, and their requirement, a migratory way of life. Here is a key to the Maroon War. It was not, directly, a class struggle; it was that only potentially, if maroons were to be re-enslaved, or plantation insurrections launched. As it was, there was no structured economic interdependence between planters and maroons; they were not classes of the same society. The Maroon War was a true *kulturkampf*, a struggle between cultures.

This conflict between hunter and planter economies explains why maroons should 'stoop' to cattle-rustling, or why the Anglo-Saxons should deem horse thieves to be such a heinous type of criminal. The back-country livestock had been there before planters or maroons. When South Carolina was founded, in the 1670s, vast herds of wild horses and cattle roamed the land, mingled with equally great herds of deer and buffalo. It was like the African savannah of recent years. When the first white men went into the hills, in the eighteenth century, they saw the same scenes. The Piedmont then was largely grassland, with only

scattered woods. During the Cherokee War back-country livestock pens were broken, and whatever animals had been domesticated rejoined their untamed cousins. Woodmason in 1768 found winding animal trails thick upon the land.<sup>12</sup> To the Anglo-Saxons, livestock must belong to someone, and if once taken became private property, whether let loose to graze or not. To the maroons the horses, cattle and swine were like the deer and buffalo; marked or not they belonged to no one, or every one, or to God. Any one could take an animal—for direct immediate personal use. Such mutually foreign values could only create total misunderstanding, when ill-will from the institution of slavery, already possessed both parties. To the planter pioneers, maroon behavior made them horse thieves and cattle rustlers. To the maroons, planter pioneer behavior made them devilish madmen. Woodmason's satire is almost insight, but could never become insight:

Do you think Sir I would take (I mean) Steal Sir,  
another's Horse! But if he runs away from You, I will  
stop Him, Hide Him in the Woods . . .<sup>13</sup>

This difference of values between planters and maroons, arising from their hunting and landed societies, and affecting their views of wild or roaming livestock, was also felt in back-country conflicts over land. Planter pioneer complaints of squatters and trespassers were bitter.<sup>14</sup> To the planter, land was to be purchased, registered and kept private whether or not in use. To the maroon, land, like deer or cattle, belonged to him who used it. And unused land belonged to no one. Nor could a paper from Charleston take away the right of the user. The maroons had kitchen gardens; they were theirs until they moved on. This people had no system and no sense of private capital property akin to the European. Their system and sense of property were similar to the communal economics of the Native American and West African nations, and probably reinforced by both heritages. The historian of the planter pioneers says "the bulk of the lower people . . . had no more respect for law . . . than the worst outlaws."<sup>15</sup> Nor did they, not for European ideas of law, neither respect nor understanding. The *Remonstrance* of the Anglo-Saxon settlers complained:

[They] range the Country . . . without Home or  
Habitations: All Persons, All Places . . . being alike to  
them. These are deep roots from which the Hords of  
Mullatoes and Villains we are pester'd with, have shot  
up . . .<sup>16</sup>



This is a remarkably accurate and analytic statement, from the direst foes of the maroons. But the more accurate the analysis, the more abominable this people seemed to those of opposite values and interests.

In general the material culture of the maroons does not seem to have been very different from that of the poorer would-be planters when these first arrived on the frontier. But the maroons had become content enough with a minimum of *impedimenta*, from their need for mobility, whereas the would-be planters were burning to secure the material signs of success, by European standards. As Woodmason puts it, with his usual degree of delicacy, "[The 'low' people] live in Logg cabins like Hogs."<sup>17</sup> The maroon cabins were of the open type, that is, closed on the sides, back and roof, but open at the front. Would-be planters quickly proceeded to build a 'Lincoln-type' cabin. No so the maroons.

The war bands sometimes had possession of relative luxuries, but most maroons had no plates, spoons, glasses or cups; they used no gourds. Indian corn bread, milk and fresh meat were their staples. When the last was not available, they ate jerked beef and salt pork in the winter, bacon in the summer. From the woods they gathered wild apples and peaches.<sup>18</sup>

One custom of the maroons, directly traceable to Indian culture, was the rubbing of the body and hair with bear oil, a protection from cold in the winter, from mosquitoes in the summer, and a cosmetic year round. They also tied up their hair behind in a bunch like Native Americans of that period and region,<sup>19</sup> and like a few African American and Poor White people today who have an exceptionally keen appreciation of their Native American heritage.

In regard to marriage, the maroons practiced a 'common-law' monogamy, with separation by mutual consent, permitting a new marriage. If any had wished a minister, of the kind recognized by the planter pioneers, they were usually none available, what with only one Anglican and two Presbyterian missionaries for the entire South Carolina back country. Of course the planter pioneers considered the maroon family arrangements to be lewdness or whoredom. Woodmason complained on this subject, "many hundreds live in concubinage swopping their Wives as Cattel, and living in a State of Nature, more irregularly and unchastely than the Indians." For they were married "by No Form, or any Ceremony" (so far as Woodmason knew).<sup>20</sup>

There are hints of an extended family. Father and mother and children shared their cabin with any aged relatives who remained. This was shocking to the planter pioneers, who had apparently already worked out some system of getting the old folks out of sight (by

moving to the frontier?).<sup>21</sup> But among the maroons there seems to have been a remarkably large number of aged people.

Unlike many Native American nations, there was no hard and fast custom about what constituted women's work. Nor was there any of the European idea of the woman's place at home. Women and girls were among the most active in giving non-combatant assistance in the struggle against the Anglo-Saxon pioneers, "aiding, abetting, Watching, Secreting, Trafficking." One young woman at least was a combatant, Captain of a maroon war band who successfully led a raid upon a plantation in which seventeen horses were carried off. The Charleston jury found her not guilty; she was under twenty, beautiful, and of elegant figure.<sup>22</sup> The beauty of the maroon women was often mentioned. Perhaps a more interesting social role for women in maroon culture was one cause for so many young Anglo-Saxon women's eloping to the maroon settlements.

Adding to the charges of licentiousness against the maroons was their clothing: the minimum for South Carolina's hot summers and lengthy springs and falls. "They went naked as Indians."

... the Females (many very pretty) come to Service in their shifts and a short petticoat only, barefotted and Bare legged ... Nakedness is counted as nothing—as they sleep together in common (in one Room) and shift and dress openly without ceremony; The Men appear in Frocks or Shirts and long Trousers—No Shoes or Stockings ...

And the children ran half-naked. But most shocking to the Anglo-Saxon susceptibilities was the maroon mode of swimming, one of their favorite pastimes: naked, men and women together.<sup>23</sup> The maroons followed a moderate nakedness taboo, such as those of many Native American and African nations, rather than the extreme form of the taboo that was found in European culture. Moreover in the planter pioneers the maroons were confronted with the most extreme form of European puritanism. Most of the planter pioneers were Presbyterians, in a time and place when Presbyterianism still meant militant Calvinism.

The culture of the maroons was oriented toward present enjoyment, the consumption of goods, and the recreational use of surplus time, rather than ambitions for future accumulation, as in the European culture. The reliance of the maroons upon hunting and a small kitchen garden for their daily bread and other small needs, neither seeking wider acres nor willing to work for others, infuriated the planter pioneers. With the price of deer skins what it was, the great supply of pelt and



meat animals available, and the fact that an accumulation of meat above present needs merely rots, the maroons cut back their hours of labor far below that of the would-be planters, grumbling as they strained over stubborn tree stumps. For the planter pioneers there was no leisure time, not without guilt: their God commanded work, and the accumulation of property was a sign of salvation. But the maroons devoted their ample leisure to the "Sunday pastimes" so abhorrent to Woodmason: besides swimming and bathing, the pastimes of horse-racing, marksmanship, fishing for pleasure, taverning, field sports, and traveling to and fro. Woodmason laments that the country was full of "gamesters . . . Racers, Fidlers . . . in short Idle and Vagrant Persons." Idleness was the Protestant sin, and worst of all, "They delight in their present low, lazy, sluttish, heathenish, hellish Life, and seem not desirous of changing it."<sup>24</sup>

The maroon culture included a powerful gregariousness, especially for celebrations, even with their 'betters,' a naive lack of class or caste consciousness. The Anglo-Saxon planter pioneers were amazed and repelled. They thundered:

It is not Slavery that I cannot be Master of my own House but that if I have a Wedding or Christianing or Birthday Dinner or any set Entertainment for private friends, then a sett of Insolent Wretches shall intrude on my Premises—mix with, and affront my Company . . . Consume my Provisions and take what Liberties they please, with Impunity?

Is it not Slavery to see my Wife or Daughters Insulted, abus'd, expos'd to the Ribaldry, Obscenity, Audaciousness and Licentiousness of drunken, idle worthless scandalous abandon'd atrocious Profligates, Libertines and Lawless Persons, Who are without Habitions or Property . . . ?<sup>25</sup>

(It would be all right if they had property?)

The government of the maroons had affinities with those of the Muskogean Indian nations of the South: the Creek, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the earlier, now ruined, coastal nations. For the Muskogean nations were both decentralized and fluid in their political associations. The real political cohesiveness lay in the local town, which itself was quite small. The forts or war camps of the maroons seem to have been about the same size as the smaller Muskogean clan towns: perhaps an average of forth fighting men, and one to two

hundred others of their families. The other sprawling settlements of the civilian maroons seem to have been about the same size as the larger Muskogean towns, perhaps a thousand inhabitants, with a higher proportion of women, children and the elderly than in the maroon war band settlements. Each maroon settlement was autonomous. There is no information on the leadership of the larger civilian settlements, whether the chieftaincy was of the spiritually gifted, the elderly and wise, or other. But it is clear that the military settlements were tightly organized, with officially recognized leaders, captains or war chiefs, and their subordinate officers. The two types of community were linked by mutual assistance: protection from the fighting maroons, and information and refuge from the more numerous civilian maroons.<sup>26</sup>

The principal concentration of maroon settlements at this time was in South Carolina, judging from the relative silence from the other Colonies. But there were other, scattered maroon settlements in Georgia, East and West Florida, and in the North Carolina and Virginia hill country. And the South Carolina settlements kept in touch with these.<sup>27</sup> Congresses of the representatives of the settlements were convened from time to time, in locations unknown to the Anglo-Saxon pioneers, to decide on matters of general concern. During the Maroon War the Charleston press reported:

...gangs of Villains from Virginia to North Carolina... for some years in small parties under particular leaders... [are] more formidable than ever as to number... [they] form a chain of communication with each other, and have places of general meeting...<sup>28</sup>

Besides the periodic congresses, the maroon settlements were in process of developing another general political institution, that of paramount chief. Considering the prominence of the name of Captain Govey Black in the records, recounted earlier, and his crucial importance in the eyes of the planter pioneer organization (pursuing him through the South for three months), it is likely that he was also respected as their chief leader by the maroon settlements. After the death of Govey Black it is clear that Colonel Joseph Scofell fulfilled the role of paramount chief. The authority of a maroon paramount chief, except in battle, would doubtless have been charismatic or persuasive, rather than by authoritative command. It is likely that the selection of a new paramount chief was by consensus, confirmed or celebrated at the congress of settlement representatives. Though governmental power in



maroon culture resided in the local settlement, the maroons' sense of common identity was also creating a federative general government.

As a people, the maroons sometimes called themselves "The Freemasons" and their local places of assembly "Masonic Lodges."<sup>29</sup> The secrecy of Masonic meetings and signs or passwords of recognition must have greatly aided maroon security and the recognition of brothers from a distance not personally known. More than a fraternal order, Freemasonry would have practically constituted a security and intelligence arm of maroon government.

But what were the maroons doing, these scorned rebels of mingled races, in association with the Masonic Order, a fraternity of prestige? For then as today the Grand Lodges in America, and the Grand Lodge of England from which they were derived, were respectable bodies, middle-class in membership, and dedicated to social order. In England the Masonic leaders were royalty, in America, the George Washingtons and Benjamin Franklins.

But the Grand Lodge of England was not founded until 1717, and did not succeed in regularizing its lodges, and separating the respectable from others not respectable, until 1739. Earlier the local lodges had differed markedly one from another. On the European continent Masonic Lodges, which did not accept the leadership of the Grand Lodge of England, developed a reputation for radical, even revolutionary politics, militant free-thought or atheism, occultism and an interest in religions other than the Christian. These suggest similar or other equally 'irregular' tendencies in old British lodges which the English Grand Lodge had been organized to exclude.<sup>30</sup>

In 1741, two years after the regularization of English Grand Lodge Masonry, Masonic dissidents in London held a "mock masonic" parade, mock in the sense that it made mockery of the new, respectable Masonry. The paraders are described as very poor, very ragged, very ne'er-do-well, and are said to have called themselves "Scald Miserable Masons" (scald meaning scurvy). The paraders bore Masonic symbols, but wore outrageous costumes. They charged that the Tyler (gate-keeper) of the gentlemen's Lodge had been their own Grand Master, with the implication that genteel Masonry had obtained its Masonic knowledge from the poor people's Lodges.<sup>31</sup>

There were enough 'irregular' Lodges in the British Isles to form their own association, against the 'regularizing' and excluding presses of the Grand Lodge of England. This opposition called its central authority The Grand Lodge of the Antients, with the implication that its Masonry was the original, unreformed by the gentlemen of the Grand Lodge of England. This Grand Lodge of the Antients was associated with or identical to a Grand Lodge of Ireland.<sup>32</sup>

Regular or Grand Lodge of England Masonry, and Antient or poor people's Masonry appeared in the American Colonies at about the same time. In 1733 it was reported that the Grand Lodge of England was sending poor Masons to Georgia, and that the Grand Lodge of the Antients was seeking to provide relief for "poor brethren throughout Britain and Ireland." In 1735 a Grand Lodge of South Carolina was founded, sponsored by the Grand Lodge of England; it was soon known as an association of the respectable classes. And before the middle of the century there were Antient Masonic Lodges in the Colonies.<sup>33</sup>

The "Scald Miserable Masons" who mocked the genteel were of the British pauper class who in such large numbers were sentenced by the English courts to transportation to the plantations as indentured servants. That those who escaped should take their Masonry with them into the wilderness is natural. And there the Lodges took on such essential community functions that the maroons as a whole sometimes called themselves the Masons.

The security and intelligence functions of the Lodges are obvious. In addition, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the rebelliousness of the British poor people's Masonry, probably related to the Continental European revolutionary Masonry, gave ritual sanction to the maroon struggle for freedom, and that the Masonic ideal of international brotherhood, expressed moderately today in 'regular' Scottish Rite Masonry by its openness to persons of all religions, and radically by the Continental European Masonic interest in the world religions, lent ceremonial support to the multi-racial character of maroon society.

Maroon culture was also distinctive in religion. 'Infidelity,' that is, religious disbelief or skepticism, was not uncommon in eighteenth century South Carolina, but is reported to have been more frequent and extreme among the maroons.<sup>34</sup> There were frontiersmen other than maroons who were 'freethinkers' in religion, and even back in Charleston two of the nine churches of the city rejected the central Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the deity or godhead of Christ.<sup>35</sup> But there were maroons who said that they had never heard of such doctrines, or the words of the Lord's Prayer, or any of the material found in Scriptures.<sup>36</sup> This extreme form of infidelity would seem to represent a total lifelong isolation rather than the usual religious rebellion. Their claim to ignorance may also have been a defense against revealing a private religion of their own to a hostile Christian outsider. Better to be thought unchurched than a follower of strange gods.

The more distinctive aspect of maroon religion was their own unique variety of organized, ecstatic mysticism. New revelations and strange visions, beliefs and practices foreign to orthodox Christianity,



had been common in Carolina. This atmosphere may have strengthened the maroons in developing their own form of mysticism, and one or two of the earlier unorthodox spiritual movements seem to have directly touched maroons, thereby influencing maroon religion.

Unorthodox religious movements of European origin had re-formed on the Southern frontier: the Moravians, sometimes with doctrines stranger than those of their European leader, Zinzendorf; Dunkards or Brethren with their foot-washing, love-feasts and covert Universalism; Seventh-Day Baptists, Judaizers and spiritual descendants of the Fifth Monarchy Men, the most revolutionary sect of seventeenth century Britain; and according to the Church of England missionary "other Motley Sects."<sup>37</sup>

The Carolina scene had also produced its own heresies. In the 1720s there was the Du Tartre Heresy. A "strolling" Moravian preacher, preaching not Zinzendorf's pietism, but Jacob Boehme's unorthodox mysticism, converted the Du Tartres, a poor family of Huguenot descent, father, mother, eight adult children, and their spouses. The eldest son-in-law, who became the chief prophet of the Du Tartres, proclaimed that he should take the youngest daughter to wife, and that the wife he put aside would be joined by her deceased husband risen from the grave; he also revealed that no man should serve in the militia. There were two battles, the first with the constabulary, the other with the militia. A daughter of the Du Tartres and a militia captain were killed, and afterwards three of the Du Tartre men were hanged. This heresy remained the talk of Carolina for decades.<sup>38</sup>

The great awakening in South Carolina produced heresies damnable in the eyes of the orthodox. In the 1740s Hugh Bryant, who had been considered the orthodox leader of the Great Awakening in Carolina, began to preach revolution to the slaves of the colony, prophesying that there would be a universal slave insurrection. He also attempted, through spiritual powers, to walk upon the waters and to part the waves of the Atlantic. These efforts in light of his preachments suggest the intended exodus of the Black people, dryshod through the ocean, from the house of bondage, home to Guinea.<sup>39</sup>

The Weber Heresy in the 1750s, only a decade before the Maroon War, was seen as a forerunner of the distinctive organized maroon mysticism. The three leaders of the Weber Heresy were believed to be God in human flesh: Jacob Weber, God the Father; John George Smithpeter, God the Son; and a Black man called Dauber, God the Holy Ghost. Dauber, or The Dove, was described as a "godless," that is, unorthodox, "colored preacher." During the existence of this movement, first Dauber the Dover, and then Smithpeter the Christ, were ceremonially slain. Enemies of the movement claimed that these were

human sacrifices. Weber was hanged by the authorities; the other members of the movement, though convicted, were pardoned. There is no hint of ceremonial killings among the maroons, but the Weber doctrine of the possession of humans by benign supernatural Beings, also a doctrine held by maroons, tends to confirm the report that this heresy was an early phase of what became the distinctive maroon religion.<sup>40</sup>

The maroons called their organized mystical religion The Gifted Brethren. Sometimes it was also known as The New Light Baptists, but other Baptists and other New Lights must have denounced the identification with horror. New Lights, in the established usage, meant merely those of any church who supported the revivals of the Great Awakening. And most American Baptists, then as now, were theologically orthodox. But The Gifted Brethren of the maroons went far afield from the Christianity of the orthodox churches and revivals. They were probably sometimes called New Light Baptists because, like the orthodox New Lights, they engaged in revival-like enthusiasm, and like Baptists, they baptised adults by immersion.<sup>41</sup>

Up to a point, the practices of the maroon Gifted Brethren were similar to other revivalistic or Pentecostal behavior.

At the communion one fellow on a bench held bread, bawling "see the Body of Christ!" Another ran with the communion cup bellowing "Who chances his Soul with the blood of Christ?" One on his knees . . . others singing, some howling, These ranting, Those crying, Others dancing, Skipping, Laughing . . . Here are two or three Women falling on their backs, kicking up their Heels . . . and others . . . like statues, quite insensitive . . .<sup>42</sup>

And they were want to receive "the gift of tongues," speaking unknown tongues according to the New Testament, or in nonsense syllables according to the respectable churches.<sup>43</sup>

But there was more to The Gifted Brethren than these gifts of the Holy Ghost, which have frequently occurred elsewhere during ecstatic worship. One maroon congregation of four hundred members was moved during service to march forth in unison into the wilderness. At another service, the congregation was moved to strip to their underwear and in this state to walk to their homes. At baptisms The Gifted Brethren marched in procession, "singing Hymns before the poor, wet, halfnaked creatures." And at weddings they marched in a circle around the bride, "singing Hymns and Chanting Orisons."<sup>44</sup>



The hymns they sang were their own, not known in words or melodies to the churches outside the maroon communities. They were "Spiritual Songs—execrable in point of Versification—full of Blasphemy Nonsense and Incoherence," with tunes not permitted in the recognized churches.<sup>45</sup> In other words, these Spiritual Songs were neither literary nor orthodox by European standards. Here, quite possibly, is an early stage in the composition of the African American Spirituals, and the 'folk' hymns of Appalachia.

Besides their ritual processions, linear and circular, the Gifted Brethren of the maroons also worshipped by means of the Holy Dance. The dancing mentioned in the description of the Communion service was not only the bodily movements of individuals, but also the enraptured group dancing of the entire congregation. For the maroon churches were built with end walls that could open wide like barn doors: "[They] must be built with four doors instead of two, and no Pulpit at all, in Order that ev'ry one may dance In and Out ev'ry Minute."<sup>46</sup> North American church history records no such church architecture. But in Kingston, Jamaica, the Pocomania Church (of the old African religion) is built with a barn-like door across the entire end, opening into a walled courtyard.<sup>47</sup> And every African temple in rural Haiti is adjoined by its open-air floor for the Holy Dance.

Besides the rituals reported, there were others, it is said, from which outsiders were more carefully excluded, "Nocturnal Meetings and Private Assemblies," in which perhaps even less common rites were conducted.<sup>48</sup>

The most striking deviation of the maroon Gifted Brethren from normative Protestant Christianity was its cult of Angels. These Holy Spirits were ritually invoked within the deep woods, and appeared in vision to those who venerated Them. The most gifted of the Gifted Brethren were possessed by these Angels of God, and thereafter these persons, as spiritual leaders of the Gifted Brethren, were themselves called by the title "Angel."<sup>49</sup>

What have we here? There is no significant or pertinent European precedent for worship by the Holy Dance, or a veneration of Angels which includes Angelic possession. but Yoruba, Dahomean and other West African religions are characterized by precisely these elements: the veneration of Holy Spirits created by God to be helpers to man; their invocation by means of the Holy Dance; and the spiritually therapeutic possession of the human devotee by these benign Spirits. West African religion flourishes even today in Haiti and Brazil, and it is apparent that it was also successfully transplanted to the Southern colonies of British North America. What would have been difficult and dangerous to practice in the slave quarters became systematic and organized under the

favorable conditions of frontier maroon independence. The Native American culture component among the maroons must have reinforced the Holy Dance and the veneration of Holy Spirits and the Catholic Celtic indentured servant component would also have reinforced the cult of Angels or Patron Saints, though not Their possession of human beings, or the ritual of the Holy Dance. That other ritual of the Gifted Brethren, however, ceremonial processions, may well have been one of the contributions of the churchless and priestless Catholic fugitives from the plantations to the new cultural synthesis of the maroons.

By the 1760s then, the maroons had developed a distinct culture, sharply differentiated from the Anglo-Saxon, in economy, economic system, family organization, customs, values, government and religion. Except for the musket and the common language, this culture was not a development from modern normative English culture, but from the conditions of wilderness living and the demands of fugitive security, with cultural forms contributed from African and Native American life, and the life of the British poor.

The concluding phase of South Carolina maroon history was The Second Maroon War, or American Revolution. During the First Maroon War and just before it, the Colonial Assembly at Charleston, with its majority of coastal planter representatives, had been very busy in common cause with the other Colonies against Great Britain's new taxes, the conflict over the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts that was leading toward the American Revolution. The planter pioneers of the back country had been too involved in their War with the maroons to be much engaged in Imperial politics, but there were those of coastal Carolina or Britain who sought to make political capital of the Maroon War. The Anglican missionary to the back country, Charles Woodmason, by his energetic support of the planter pioneers against the maroons, had virtually become their ideologist and secretary to their organization. Woodmason's purpose was to detach these frontier people of property from the propertied classes on the coast, to channel their anger against the east-coast establishment into support for King and Parliament in the quarrels between the Colonies and the Motherland. He made much of what he called the hypocrisy of the Colonists' slogan "No taxation without representation," when this is precisely what the Carolina Government was inflicting upon the planter pioneers by failing to establish local government for the back country. It seemed eminently reasonable to Woodmason that the planter pioneers would become a party of staunch King's Men, since these pioneers and the Crown shared the same enemy, Charleston, which had wronged them both, and which both sought to humble.<sup>50</sup> It appears that the other two public figures of the Colony who actively supported the back-country



Anglo-Saxon settlers shared Woodmason's strategy and expectations: Chief Justice Charles Shinner, who had encouraged mob actions by the planter pioneers just before the War, and Lieutenant-Governor William Bull II, who very early had tried to acquaint members of the Assembly with the social conditions of the frontier. They constituted a small but prominent clique who wished to reap allies for the Empire by the alienation of the back-country planters.<sup>51</sup>

That there was this external political strategic interest in the Maroon War prompts a long look at Governor Charles Montagu's quite opposite policy. His public denouncing of the planter pioneers, his stern prosecution of planter pioneers charged with crimes and captured, the legal exoneration of many arrested maroons, his pardoning of a few convicted maroons, his decision to remove all members of the planter pioneer movement from the offices of Justice of the Peace and militia command, his selection of Scofield to carry out his decision, and his mediation through his messengers between the planter and maroon troops,<sup>52</sup> may have been the result of some personal quirk or narrow interest. but also the policy may have been the result of a political strategy on the part of the Governor: to preserve the maroon people, and their potential power, as a resource against the rebellious Anglo-Saxon planter-led Colonists, as a possible ally for the Imperial interest. It would have been a strategy with the identical purpose of that of Woodmason and company, but with the opposite means, maroons, not backwoods planters. Thoughts of such alliances were in the air, or soon would be. While the Maroon War was in process, and Montagu was pursuing his policy of benign neutrality toward the maroons, a Captain of the British Army was arrested in Boston for the incitement of slave insurrections with the aim of "driving the Liberty Boys to death." Six years after the Maroon War the Royal Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, in consultation with the Royal Governor of North Carolina, proclaimed emancipation to slaves and indentured servants of rebel Americans, if they would flee their masters and fight for the King. And before the proclamation, Dunmore stated in private that he had contacts with elements in the "back parts" of the country who would rally to his cause. In the concluding years of the American Revolution this strategy of military emancipation was to become the official policy of the British High Command, and the Black alliance would play an important part in the British re-occupation of South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>53</sup>

Whether or not Governor Montagu's policy during the Maroon War was an early approach to the coming British strategy of alliance, the maroons at the time thought it was, or pretended to think so. They called themselves "The Friends of the Government," meaning the Royal authority!<sup>54</sup> It was obviously a hand extended toward Montagu's. If they

might maintain their freedom, England would have friends against the slave-holding and slave-trading Liberty Boys. Besides a common enemy, there were other reasons for the maroons to propose such an alliance. The Proclamation Line of 1763 established by Great Britain gave hope not only to the Native American Nations that the West might be secure from planter and farmer settlement,<sup>55</sup> but also to fugitives at or beyond the frontier, such as the South Carolina maroons. Presumably no informed Native American or maroon doubted that rule by Americans rather than British would mean the speedier throwing open of their sanctuary to the Anglo-Saxon pioneers. Moreover there were statements from the Attorney-General of Great Britain and the British Board of Trade and Plantations, made to South Carolina in 1748 and to Virginia in 1750, that chattel slavery in the colonies was illegal, that slaves were not personal property but inalienable parts of the estate on which they lived, that no slave could be sold from his home and loved ones.<sup>56</sup> Just as we must assume that this news was received with dismay by slave-owners, so we may assume that it was (quietly) greeted with joy by the enslaved, and likely to have played its part in the maroons' announcing themselves as "The Friends of the Government."

It turned out that the back country of South Carolina did become a hot bed of Loyalism or Toryism during the American Revolution. As the British Army, white and Black, reclaimed the coastal South for the Empire, Loyalist partisan troops overran the Southern back country. Who were these frontier Loyalists, in such numbers? Until recently historians followed the same reasoning as had Woodmason and his associates: surely the Loyalists of the back country must have been the planter pioneers, still angry at the east-coast planters who were now leading the American Revolution in the South. But now the definitive history of the Anglo-Saxon pioneers of the Carolina back country has established that most of the back country planters became adherents of the American Revolution.<sup>57</sup> For swiftly after the Maroon War the Carolina Government had enacted local government for the back country, and planters of the interior and the coast clasped hands in reconciliation.<sup>58</sup> But if the Loyalists were not back-country planters, who were they?

They were the maroons. When war broke out, John Rutledge, President of South Carolina, informed his Assembly of two terrible facts: there were "incursions of the disaffected," the 'low people' who had been driven from the province were invading; and the others who had seemed to be subdued were arising, there were "insurrections among our own people."<sup>59</sup> The Assembly voted:



An Act to prevent Sedition and punish Insurgents: . . . if any person within the Colony shall compell, induce, or persuade any white person, free negro, mullato or Indian to desert from his habitation or any slave from his master to join the forces of Great Britain or forces with authority derived from Great Britain or any hostile armed persons to oppose or subvert the Government of South Carolina, it shall be a felony, with the punishment of death . . . <sup>60</sup>

But the maroons remembered the floggings, the burned-out settlements, the burial grounds of their loved ones from which they had been driven, and did not heed this law. Gratified at Dunmore's proclamation of freedom for Loyalist slaves and indentured servants, the alliance they had suggested a decade before, they resolved to fight for King George and his Parliament, more likely protectors and mediators than independent States under slaveholder rule would be. From swamps or deep woods, from America beyond the frontier of Anglo-Saxon planter settlement, the maroons returned.

From their base at Lynche's Creek hundreds of his Majesty's maroon partisans raided down to the coastal plantations of South Carolina, under their Colonel and Major, the Harrison brothers, whose home was an open cabin, their bed the skins of deer.<sup>61</sup>

In the back country of the Colony, the "mulatto" guerrilla commander, Shoemaker, and his Loyalist band, surprised at their supper of salt pork and cornbread, drove off the enemy with many casualties on both sides, winning the Battle of Naked Creek.<sup>62</sup>

From the far northern outpost of the maroon confederacy, at the Sauratown Mountains of western North Carolina, Captain Stanly and his war band, Black and other, raided from their natural fortress cave called Tory House, eastward into the cattle plantations, as maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp raided west.<sup>63</sup>

And back from beyond came Colonel Joseph Scofell, his title now validated by the King's Commission, and with him as his personal command five hundred mounted warriors, his maroon comrades in arms of yore or their children. As ten years before in the First Maroon war they cut a swath of destruction across back country plantations, but now through Florida and Georgia as well as South Carolina. Already there were American planters in Florida, adherents of Independence, and during 1778 Scofell's Command ravaged the St. Marys and St. Johns river lands, which were to be the field of operations almost a century later of the first Black regiment of the Union Army. By what he and his

soldiers did then, Florida was secured and could serve at the end of the American Revolution as a haven for coastal Loyalists white and Black.

In the deep South it was terror to the slaveholder, joy to the slave. The word Tory was erased from the lips of Carolinians, and replaced by the word, dreaded or beloved, Scofellite. Whatever the chain of command of the British Regulars, most back country Loyalists of the deep South looked to Colonel Scofell as their leader and inspiration, for he was paramount chief of the maroons, the predominant Loyalist component.<sup>64</sup>

Historians of the American Revolution have generally pointed out that unlike the battles between American and British regulars, the war between Americans and Loyalists was a ferocious civil war, fought often beyond the rules of warfare. Histories have also pointed out that this civil war was particularly savage in the Southern back country, a war of terrorism and atrocity. Usually however it has not been noted that the merciless cruelty of the Southern interior was a war between two social orders and cultures. And none has pointed out that the central antagonism was of race and slavery.

Two Southern historians of the nineteenth century did make clear that the major component of the Southern back country Tories were Scofellites. Speaking of the beginning of the American Revolution; John W. Moore states in his *History of North Carolina*:

About the same time that Colonel Howe moved with the 2d North Carolina Continental Battalion against Lord Dunmore, another important expedition was organized in Western North Carolina. In the upper portion of South Carolina, certain loyalists, called Scovillites, had arrayed a considerable body of men in arms for the King. They were making great headway against the Whig cause.

Militia of three North Carolina counties joined the South Carolina militia, and

... they besieged the Tory commanders, Cunningham and Fletchall, at Ninety-Six. The Royalists attempted a retreat but were overtaken and defeated. Besides the dead, there were four hundred of the Scovillites taken prisoners and the royal cause for the time being was utterly prostrated in the Palmetto State.<sup>65</sup>

It was the renowned Southern historian and author of historical novels, William Gilmore Simms, in his *History of South Carolina*,



who explicitly and emphatically presented the campaigns in the southern interior as a social war, though Simms, like Moore, does not reveal the ethnic and racial basis of the cleavage. He begins with the earlier conflict:

It was one of the evils of this [back country] population that it was heterogeneous . . . To such a region, remote from society, unrestrained by law, there naturally came numbers of reckless adventurers: rude, savage, lean, and hungry men, who preferred the life of the hunter or squatter, and who were just as likely to prey upon the possessions of the good citizens as upon the wild denizens of the forest. Our backwoods settlers very soon found themselves infested by tribes of ruffianly wanderers who could give no proper account of their lives, conduct and means of subsistence. Cattle stalking, hog and horse stealing, became legitimate occupations with all this class of people . . .

The phrase "became legitimate" demonstrates Simm's acumen: he is indicating that these folk were not criminals of the majority community, but another social group pursuing its own incompatible values. After recounting the organization of the Regulators, Simms proceeds:

The horse-thieves and cattle-reivers themselves were quite too numerous and too hardy to submit peaceably to the wild justice which took their outlawries in hands [*sic*]. They too made common cause in defense, and were sustained by many, not like themselves, offenders, who felt indignant at the usurpation of authority, and, perhaps, abuse of justice. The issue between the two parties became one of arms, and threatened a civil war.

Simms then tells of the rise of "Scovil," and the mediation by Governor Montague, and then the transition to the American Revolution:

But the parties did not cease to exist. The Regulators exulted in having brought so many criminals to justice, and in having forced the establishment of their local courts; and they continued to point to the followers of Scovil as an outlawed and roguish [vagrant] population.

Regulators and Scovilites became the party names of the back country, and the several terms of reproach, freely employed, kept up the grudges and the animosities between them until these found their free exercise and ferocious expression in the war of the Revolution, when the name of Scovilites became changed to that of Tories, and the Regulators became the Whigs.

The first conflicts of the civil war (1775) in South Carolina were really between these old parties under their new names . . .

The common appeal of the loyalist leaders was to the vulgar prejudices against rank and wealth, the haughty assumptions of the citizens and planters of the seaboard . . .

Concludes Simms: After the Scovilite army of 1900 soldiers was defeated by the planter army of 3000 in 1775, the former dispersed into guerrilla bands, but with the British Southern campaign of 1780,

. . . they emerged from their hiding-places, and formed an auxiliary portion of the invading army, ranking rather with its red allies than its white.<sup>66</sup>

This is the closest to which Simms comes to revealing the racial nature of the Scovilites, mustees, mulattoes, Negroes and a mixture of every sort, the fact so often reported when this people was first observed. He does however clearly point to what was the ultimate horror of the Scovilites in the minds of their enemy. Whites had joined with non-whites against the dominant white social order. One is reminded of the reactions evoked by the alliance of Roanoke settlers and Tuscaroras in North Carolina sixty years before.

[In 1780] A small affair with the Indians, in which they were defeated, led to a discovery which opened a new and bloody page in southern history. Thirteen of their number, who were taken, proved to be white men, disfigured, disguised, and painted so as to resemble Indians.

Henceforth, a warfare between the civilized [*i.e.* English-speaking] was to ensue, so savage in its atrocities as to justify the subsequent description of it by General Greene, who asserts that the 'parties pursued each other like wild beasts.' Other states knew nothing of the horrors



which were the consequence of the domestic feuds of the South.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from its statement of the heart of the matter in the thinking of the Anglo-Saxon planter community, the passage also offers an additional piece of information on maroon culture, its incorporation of forms from the older cultures. It would seem that maroon war bands, in battle, took upon themselves some of the morale-building war signs of Native America (the paint) or of Africa (the disfigurement, scarification).

Not all who fought as Loyalists in the Southern back country were maroons. There were gentlemen Loyalists from the coast, Loyalist units from northern colonies, and Scottish Highlanders, kilted and Celtic-speaking settlers. But Scoffel's folk predominated, and were among the Loyalist troops in most of the many engagements. Even a restudy of available sources for British army composition, however desirable, would be unlikely to identify the race and ethnicity of officers and enlisted personnel in the partisan units. The most that is likely ever to be said is that in the interior the major component of the Loyalist troops were maroons, of the community descended from Black, Native American and Poor White fugitives, and that therefore they were present at most engagements, and the dominant force at many.

A general re-examination of the American Revolution, especially in the South, is required from the insights of maroon history. Here only a few bloody vignettes can be offered.

Between the dispersal of the maroon army in 1775 and the British Southern campaign of 1780 there was one concerted and victorious operation by British regulars and maroon troops. At the end of 1778 while the British Navy and Army proceeded to the siege of Savannah, Georgia, maroon war bands regathered in the back country of South Carolina and as a force of 800 soldiers devastated the plantation lands towards the Savannah River. Overtaken and surprised by a planter army, they were defeated, but 300 fought their way through to Georgia. There they joined forces with a smaller maroon unit which had been ravaging the plantations along the River, and as a cavalry battalion of 400 advanced towards Augusta, suffering two defeats upon the trail. But soon after the capture of coastal Savannah by the British Army, Georgia's inland center Augusta fell before the onslaught of the maroons.

The maroons held Augusta until 1780, when an army of the United States besieged the town. The defenders held out for three months, at last storming out upon the foe. They were driven back, and Augusta fell to the U.S. forces, except for a single building. There the remaining

maroons, under their commanding officer Thomas Browne, continued their defense. The last four days of the siege were the culmination of the suffering of months. There was no surgeon, but the many wounded continued to fight. Browne, shot through both thighs, in great pain, his legs swelling, maintained active command. There was no water, but the soldiers maintained body liquid to fight by collecting and doling out their urine. Their commander was first to drink. At the end of the fourth day reinforcements arrived, the siege was broken, and Augusta was held for the maroon and British alliance. Later in the war, when Thomas Browne was captured, there were attempts to assassinate him for what he and his had accomplished at Augusta.

During the British Southern campaign of 1780, another back country Loyalist unit, called Samuel Bryan's Corps, assembled from scattered war bands to the number of 800. They were under constant attack on their way to the center of operations, and forced to scatter and re-assemble once more. Reaching the British regulars, they fought beside them in the major Battle of Camden, which victory of the allies opened the way to North Carolina.

A smaller detachment, eighty African Americans under the command of John Burnet, were cut off from their army, and successfully made their escape through Georgia, across the mountains of what were to be Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Ohio River, westward along that River to the Mississippi, then down the great river to Natchez and safety. It is rather unlikely that any body of non-Native-American soldiers other than maroons could have made such a journey at this early time.<sup>68</sup>

At the major battle of King's Mountain, North Carolina, a terrible defeat for the alliance, its troops were hemmed in by withering fire power from advantageous terrain on all sides. 200 were killed, the remainder captured. Among the defeated were only 162 British regulars; the remainder were 963 back country Loyalists.<sup>69</sup>

At the siege of the Loyalist center and fort called Ninety-Six in South Carolina, the United States forces were unable to take the place or starve out its defenders, and turned to the use of flaming arrows to burn out the Loyalists. Whereupon the latter tore off the roofs of the buildings within the town, though their action cost them much suffering from exposure to the elements. There was no water within the walls, but the darker skinned defenders stole out at night, blending into the shadows, and brought back what little water they could carry through the woods, through the enemy lines, and over the stockade. By such ingenuity as well as courage the Loyalists fought on, as had those at Augusta, until the arrival of reinforcements. The exceptional heroism



has been well explained as the actions of "men desperate from their social position."

Besides now unknown or unnamed encounters between maroons and their enemy the planter troops, and not counting the adjunct battles in Georgia and North Carolina, the official roster of battles in which Loyalists fought in South Carolina numbers thirty: Fort Moultrie, Stono, the Siege of Charleston, Camden, Hanging Rock, Musgrove's Mill, Blackstock's, Georgetown, Black Wings, Cowpens, Fish-Dam Ford, Ninety-Six, Fort Galpin, Fort Walton, Fort Mott, Hobkirk's Hill, Granby, Cedar Springs, Hammond's Store, Quimby, Eutaw, Rocky Mount, Port Royal, Tulafinny, Coosahatchie, Waxhaw, Cloud's Creek, Hay's Station, Kettle Creek and Huck's Defeat.<sup>70</sup>

The Loyalists, unlike the British regulars, were not treated as prisoners of war. Throughout the war, when they were not massacred as outlaws, they were condemned for the civil and capital crimes of treason or insurgency, - *i.e.*, slave rebellion. Loyalists fought "with halters around their neck." The romantic hero of the American Revolution in South Carolina, Francis Marion "the Swamp Fox" held to the motto "No quarter to the tories!" His method was massacre, a condition unknown in the other theaters of the American Revolution.<sup>71</sup>

From 1780 to the British surrender in 1783 the Scoffelites or Tories held out in the back country of South Carolina and Georgia, and according to the still respected pioneer American historian of Loyalism remained in the ascendancy.<sup>72</sup> With the British regulars and their many thousands of newly escaped Black allies controlling the coast, and maroon power allied to the Crown in the interior, Great Britain was able to restore the colonial governments of the deep South in those years, and there was no United States political authority in the region. British government and "colored" ascendancy were never militarily overthrown in the South, but fell because of Cornwallis's disaster far in the north at Yorktown, and the decision of the British government to end the war.

Thus to the pages of African American history are added African American battles and campaigns against slavery of greater magnitude than the Nat Turner and Stono insurrections and the brilliant plans of Denmark Vesey and Gabriel. To the history of the United States is added the understanding that in the interior of the deep South, as in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina, the American Revolution was less an international war between the United States and Great Britain over the issues of independence, than a civil war, a social war, between maroons and planters over the issue of slavery.

The most current study of the American Revolution in the deep South is an advance over previous treatments, except Simms's, in that

it presents the campaigns as a guerrilla war, as indicated by its title, *The Partisan War*. It is a comparison of the Southern campaigns of that war to the recent Vietnam War. But like almost all other studies of the Southern theater in the American Revolution, it fails to consider the social basis of the guerrilla war. For this reason it compares the forces of the United States, fighting for independence, to the Viet Cong, and the Loyalists, supporting the British government, to the French or Americans in Vietnam.<sup>73</sup> Now however the comparison, if it must be made, must be reversed. It was the Scoffelite maroon Loyalists who are more comparable to the Viet Cong, as poor people, "colored" people, the earlier occupants of the land, rebels against what they considered an oppressive system, and fighters to maintain their new-won freedom. It was the United States forces in the American Revolution who are more comparable to the French or Americans in Vietnam, as a more affluent or individualistically acquisitive people, a white people, late-comers to the region, who intended by force of arms to dominate.

Consideration of the Second Maroon War clarifies another historical problem: Who were the Loyalists? Maroon history does not answer the question for other regions of British North America, but it does for the deep South. The decisive element among Loyalists, enabling Great Britain to regain the interior as well as the coast, were the maroons.

Why has the American Revolution in the South as a social war been so largely overlooked, and that war as a war of race and slavery entirely unnoted for 200 years? Perhaps in the times of slavery and peonage some looked away from the nature of that war lest its memory kindle new revolts by the still oppressed. In more recent times some liberals may have avoided the reality because of its repulsiveness. But the present author believes that the major reason this history was overlooked was because it was not looked for.

At the surrender of the regular British Army, thousands of the freedmen who had enlisted escaped from America with the British fleet. But the maroon Loyalists who had conquered the Southern back country could not fight their way down to the coast.

Some probably made their way to their sister nation, the Seminole Nation of Florida,<sup>74</sup> but not many. Muskogean continued to be the common language of Native American and Black Seminoles, and the European component of the Seminoles continued to be very slight, both counter-indications that the back country maroons reached Florida in significant numbers.

Some, probably more than made their way to Florida, are likely to have ascended into the high Appalachians, especially units cut off in the upper South. The barrier that could be avoided during the great



southward migration in the early eighteenth century now had to be faced. There was nowhere else to go.

But the bulk of the back country maroons, in the deep South, had an easier and more attractive western wilderness beckoning. The mountains and beyond western South Carolina and northern Georgia; there was no barrier here. Beyond lay the unsettled lands now called Alabama and Mississippi, even their national ownership then disputed.

How far they traveled, and how long they endured as a distinct people, must await the analysis of further research. However long they persisted as a people, they ceased at last. At the end, they must have passed into other social groups.

Some of their lighter-skinned descendants are likely to be found as one element of the "Appalachian Whites." The maroon experience would explain why some climbed such peaks to descend into such deep hollows and have been so reluctant to come out, or welcome outsiders in. The term "Appalachian White" itself can be taken to suggest that once some of them were considered a special kind of "white." The old Southern proverb seems to speak to this: A poor white is not just a white who is poor. Perhaps a maroon ancestry is behind that physical type of the inland Southerner which is encountered so often in the nineteenth century, dark, lean, high-cheek-boned, such as Calhoun, Jefferson Davis, and Lincoln. If the maroon people did continue to grow in numbers into the nineteenth century, it is likely that many eventually passed into the ancestry of numerous families of 'old American stock' in the states of the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys. After the first generation that passed, the children would know nothing definite of this background. An undefined difference might persist, producing a higher than usual proportion of Abolitionists in some families, of Klansmen in others.

Under the conditions of American segregation, there is no doubt that the darker-skinned descendants of the maroon are members of the African American community today. In the press of passing from the maroon community into the general Black community there are several stops along the way which suggest themselves: the Black neighborhoods of the ante-bellum Southern cities, where 'free' Black people and large numbers of slaves on their own, hiring out their time, lived, more unknown to outsiders than the urban Black neighborhoods of today; the large, distinctive, little-known river people of the Mississippi and the Ohio, roustabouts, longshoremen and boatmen, on the levees of the riverport towns; and the myriad little Black farm communities scattered through the Middle West until the general movement from country to city. If the maroon population did continue to grow after the American Revolution, then it must constitute one of

three groups that came together at Emancipation to form the present African American people: the freedmen's contributing their heritage of endurance and covert resistance, the 'free' Blacks' their knowledge of majority techniques and legal modes of struggle, and the maroons' contributing a more intensive cultural heritage and sense of nationhood.

Besides the lighter and the darker, there were maroons who in their families or settlements included such a diversity of physical appearance that they could or would hardly merge into either the majority or the Black community. Their social destination seems beyond doubt. There are today many rural communities of persons of Indian, Black and European ancestry who keep to themselves and are socially not members of the Black, white or Indian communities. Sociologists call them "Tri-Racial Isolates." From the Census of 1960, when their enumeration was encouraged, they numbered 64,000, but 100,000 is a more accurate estimate. They are divided into 216 separate communities, each community ranging from one to scores of villages. Thirty-nine of the communities are located in the Northeast, thirty-four in the foot-hills of the upper South and in the Midwest, thirty-five in the Southern coastal region, thirty-two in the lower Gulf states, and fifteen in northern Wisconsin and Michigan. Another thirty-six of these communities are in the foot-hills of South and North Carolina, and twenty-five in adjacent parts of Tennessee and Kentucky.<sup>75</sup> These latter sixty-one, with half the population of the "Tri-Racial Isolates," are certainly in the correct geographical location to be related to the back country maroons of the eighteenth century. Many of the communities in the other regions also seem to be descended from these maroons at other stages of their history, or from other maroon communities. The groups today are known by many names, often of unknown, unfriendly or ambiguous origin, such as Croatans, Lumbees, Melungeons, Brass Ankles, Turks and Moors. Most are "squatters" or tenant farmers and farm laborers. They hunt and fish more than their neighbors and a number are collectors of medicinal herbs. Characteristically they are not members of any known church, but sometimes have a rich folklore of their own. Besides the number remaining in the country, many have moved to the cities, where they still constitute a community, the lighter on the fringes of poor white neighborhoods, the darker on the fringes of the Black.<sup>76</sup> Only rarely have they confided any warlike or nationally separate history to the sociologists. The largest community, the Lumbees, formerly called Croatans, some 30,000 persons living near the border between North and South Carolina, fought as guerrillas against the Confederacy during the Civil War, have established their own university, and following the Second World War received national attention by fighting off and subduing the Ku Klux Klan in a pitched



battle.<sup>77</sup> With Black descendants of bygone members now in the African American community, and white descendants in the majority community, many of the separate settlements which remain today identify themselves as Native Americans, though no elements of culture or heritage have been advanced which link them to specific historic Native American nations.

The origins and destinies of the maroons, the three peoples who for a long while were one, their battles and migrations, the truly American culture they created in their time, together constitute an extraordinary saga. The history of this one back country migration raises the question: Were there others? If there were, then American society remains an unknown entity. And we must ask, and seek answers to the question: Who are we?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Richard Maxwell Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1963), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," in Richard T. Hooker, ed., *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Gregg, ed., *History of the Old Cheraws, 1730 to 1810* (New York: Richardson and Co., 1867), p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 168.

<sup>6</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 226.

<sup>7</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," p. 246; Woodmason, "Journal, June 29, 1768," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>8</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Charity, Saludy [*sic*] River, South Carolina, 1770," *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, June 16, 1768," *Ibid.*, p. 47; Woodmason, "Sermon on the Baptists and the Presbyterians," *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 231n; Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670–1732* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1929), pp. 104, 112; John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier, 1754–1775* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1944), pp. 15n, 301; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities, Societies of the Colonial South* (New York: Athenaeum, 1965), p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> John H. Logan, *A History of the Upper Country of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC.: S. G. Courtenay, 1859), p. 159; Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 7; Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 109; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 12; Woodmason, "Journal, April 6, 1768," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>13</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians," p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 226.

<sup>17</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, September 28, 1766," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 29, 1768, pp. 48–49; Woodmason, "Letter Accompanying Remonstrance," *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>19</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, September 4, 1768," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, February 7, 1767, p. 15; Woodmason, "Sermon on Baptist and Presbyterians," p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, June 29, 1768," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>22</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon Before . . . Rangers," *Ibid.*, pp. 282, 257n.

<sup>23</sup> Woodmason, "Journal, January 1, March 20, 1768"; *Ibid.*, "Sermon on Charity," "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians"; all in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 31–32, 33, 107, 121.

<sup>24</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians," pp. 96, 101; "Journal, August 8, 1768," pp. 53–54.

<sup>25</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Letter sent to John R. Rutledge," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 275–77.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29n; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 30; Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on 'Advertisement: To Be Disposed of . . . Fifty Thousand Prime Slaves,'" in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 258; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 29.



<sup>28</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, July 27, August 3, 1767, in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207n.

<sup>30</sup> Melvin M. Johnson, *The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924), pp. 22–23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23, 73, 109.

<sup>34</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 225; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. xxv.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Woodmason, "An Account of the Churches in South Carolina Georgia, North Carolina and the Floridas, Charleston 1765," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 73; David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina* (Newberry, S.C.: W. J. Duffie, 1858), vol. 2, p. 17n.

<sup>36</sup> South Carolina Regulators, "Remonstrance," p. 225.

<sup>37</sup> Woodmason, "Notes on Remonstrance," pp. 240–41; Robert L. Meriwether, *The Expansion of South Carolina 1729–1765* (Kingport, Tenn.: Southern Publishers, (1940), p. 157.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* (London: Alexander Donaldson, 1779), reprinted in Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina* (New York: 1846), pp. 261–63.

<sup>39</sup> M Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina. A Political History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 231.

<sup>40</sup> Woodmason, "An Account of the Churches," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 78; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians," p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.

<sup>43</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on the New Light Baptists, South Carolina, July 8, 1771," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116; "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians," p. 104.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> Visit by the author to the inner city Pocomania Church, Kingston, Jamaica, November, 1963.

<sup>48</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Baptists and Presbyterians," p. 101.

<sup>49</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on New Light Baptists," p. 114.

<sup>50</sup> Woodmason, "Sermon on Occasion of . . . Regulators' Being Put into the Commission of the Peace," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 288; Woodmason, "Journal, August 30, 1767 (year-end report)," *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, December 26, 1766, *Ibid.*, p. 11-12; Christopher Gadsden, "Letter from Americus Britannus to the *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, Charleston, April 1, 1769," *Ibid.*, p. 265; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 64.

<sup>52</sup> South Carolina (Colony), Royal Council, "Proceedings, October 5, 1767," in Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 135; South Carolina (Colony), Commons House of Assembly and Royal Council, Joint Session, "Proceedings, November 5, 1767," *Ibid.*, p. 136; South Carolina (Colony), Commons House of Assembly, "Journal . . . January 8, 1765-August 9, 1765," *Ibid.*, p. 173; Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 171-72, 175, 183, 242n, 279n; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, New ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1969) p. 199n; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), pp. 19, 21n, 113-15, 137-39. It is interesting that the English Tory Party, which had benefitted the old Roanoke community, but had been out of power for fifty years, was now reconstituted by George III.

<sup>54</sup> Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 207n.

<sup>55</sup> Alden, John Stuart, pp. 181, 336; Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 89n.

<sup>56</sup> Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, p. 120. Also see Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, p. 188.

<sup>58</sup> William Tennent, "Fragment of a Journal . . . in 1775, to Upper South Carolina at the Request of the Council of Safety to Induce the Tories to Sign an Association to Support the Cause of the Colonists, South Carolina, 1775," in Hooker, *Carolina Backcountry*, pp. 296-98.

<sup>59</sup> Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 243.

<sup>60</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina . . . By Thomas Cooper* (Columbia: A. S. Johnson, 1838), vol. 4, 1752-1786, pp. 344-45.

<sup>61</sup> Gregg, *Old Cheraws*, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>63</sup> E. W. Caruthers, *Interesting Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Characters Chiefly in the "Old North State"* (Philadelphia: Hayes and Zell, 1856), pp. 260, 263.



<sup>64</sup> Or Coffellite, in accord with the variations on the Chief's name. Brown, *South Carolina Regulators*, pp. 204–5; Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1864), vol. 2, p. 267.

<sup>65</sup> Moore, *North Carolina*, vol. 1: p. 200.

<sup>66</sup> William Gilmore Simms, *The History of South Carolina*, new and rev. (Charleston, S.C.: Russell and Jones, 1860), pp. 142–47, 179, 193.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>68</sup> Sabine, *Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1, pp. 261–63, 272, 275.

<sup>69</sup> Simms, *South Carolina*, pp. 269, 272.

<sup>70</sup> Sabine, *Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1, pp. 42–44, 344.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 246, 348; vol. 2, pp. 185, 191; Simms, *South Carolina*, pp. 227, 269, 293.

<sup>72</sup> Sabine, *Biographical Sketches*, vol. 1, p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780–1782*, South Carolina Tricentennial Commission Booklets, no. 2 (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 2, 11.

<sup>74</sup> The Seminole Nation, founded by the Indian and Black fugitive communities of Florida, has been studied as an Indian Nation, but not as a maroon republic, a part of African American history.

<sup>75</sup> Brewton Berry, *Almost White* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), pp. 14, 52 (map), 88. This work is based, in good part, on a large number of sociology articles. It is subdivided into 'almost white,' 'almost Black' and 'almost Indian.'

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 63, 91.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

## Chapter 17

### Conclusion: The Other America

The accounts of the maroon communities of Roanoke, the Great Dismal Swamp, and the South Carolina back country, are three distinct histories in time, place and details of community experience. They also express an historic development of the resistance to servitude by the enslaved, responding to changed conditions.

In the seventeenth century large regions of the eastern coast of North America were uncolonized, the portions that were organized as colonies were sparsely settled, and the colonial governments were not yet uniform or systematic. As a result the fugitives of Roanoke were able to live without physical concealment in open countryside near the sea. They were isolated by the stretches of land around them as yet unoccupied by European settlers, and by physical barriers along the coast that would later prove no obstacle to powerful colonial authorities. As a colony Roanoke remained an autonomous community founded by and sympathetic to fugitives, thanks to the irregularity and decentralization of colonial rules. The settlers were visible to the eyes, when eyes from abroad chose to roam among them, but inaccessible to control.

This phase passed. Fugitives from bondage or the social system of slave plantation colonies could no longer live in open coastal country physically unconcealed. European settlement became continuous along the seaboard and many colonies grew populous and well-organized, while colonial and imperial authority became stable, systematic and in many respects uniform. Colonies and the Empire grew rich and thereby armed with the power to control social order. Now it became necessary for fugitives from servitude or from other despised status in slavery society not only to escape successfully, but also to conceal themselves physically. The sanctuaries sought were now wilderness enclaves



surrounded by settled land and colonial jurisdiction. The results were the growth of the maroon community of the Great Dismal Swamp, and perhaps other smaller communities of the many coastal swamplands.

The third phase was the search by fugitives for a secure home other than remaining wilderness locations near the seaboard. This may have been the result in part of islands in the swamp reaching a saturation point for population. The reluctance to flee to east coast swamps was certainly the result of the spread of plantation country into the interior. To reach an old sanctuary, a fugitive would need travel through the most dangerous parts of the colony. Thus appeared maroon communities beyond the Anglo-Saxon plantation settlement, first in the upper South, then in the lower, the maroons migrating ahead of the new settlers at every stage. Once again maroons and their settlements were visible to the eye, in open country, but there were no unfriendly eyes to see.

As British North America developed, the goal for freedom and a free community evolved, from distant but open coastal country, into the swampland, and then on to the back country.

Similarities of social order and culture are obvious among the three communities studied here, Roanoke, the Dismal Swamp maroons, and the back country confederation. These are not so much from mutual influence as from similar problems and the same heritage: subsistence economies; minimal cash products (tobacco, shingles, furs); distinctive values concerning property, leisure and family (documented for Roanoke and the back country but also probably characteristic of the Dismal Swamp community); and a similar form of government in the Swamp and back country, though not in Roanoke, with its colonial forms. The chief difference among the three societies appears to have been that African, Native American and British peasant influences were more evenly spread throughout Roanoke and the back country, but in the Dismal Swamp were focused upon settlements which chose to emphasize a particular heritage, for reasons of local pride. But these too, apart from community symbolism, were of all three heritages and ancestries, and were united with the other Dismal Swamp settlements whose symbolic emphases were different. This greater particularity or localism of settlements in the Dismal Swamp, in contrast to those of Roanoke and the back country, may be explained by easier and therefore more frequent travel between settlements in the dry and open countryside.

One of the most striking characteristics of the cultures was the adapted preservation of West African Spiritist religion in the Dismal Swamp and back country communities. Not only underlying attitudes or values survived, but also forms (angelic Spirits, possession, ritual

dance). The explanation may be a British peasant lack of enthusiasm for the old Church (as evidenced at Roanoke), and the ministering to personal as well as community needs in African Spiritism. Native Americans, whose Spiritism undoubtedly reinforced the African, may have welcomed the extension of the functions of the Holy Spirits from the preservation and celebration over with them from the old world, before the development of genocide for Native Americans and chattel slavery for Africans. But not these British peasants who became maroons; or else they shed their old world prejudice with astonishing dispatch. The fury and contempt felt by Poor White, Black and Native American maroons were reserved for their mutual enemy, those who used their "whiteness" as a license to kill and to enslave.

All historic and national or cultural race relations are not the same. The existence of three rather than two castes in the West Indies and elsewhere, white, Black, and mulatto or colored, has mitigated the white racism of those lands. Latin America has not been without its racism, it is generally agreed today. But it is also agreed that the race relations there are very different from those characteristic of the United States, historically and today. Race relations in the maroon communities were different from any of these. The evidence shows that maroon society lacked a caste system based upon color or other inherited physiognomy.

This society has been referred to in the study as "The Other America"—the America that might have been—no, the America that *was* for a time, in certain places. The findings preclude any belief, philosophic or unconscious, that the racist development of the United States was inevitable. Alternatives actually existed.

Psychiatrists have defined mental health to include an awareness of alternatives. The persons who sees fewer, narrower alternatives than exist is neurotic. Sometimes when an alternative was missed, long ago rejected, suppressed, repressed, it is necessary for the severely neurotic to go back to his or her early life, in recollection at first, then in present living, to take the alternative path that was lost. The process is painful. It means facing terrible fears, passing through new depressions, a wrenching adoption of new life style, the loss of prestige, friends, loved ones, even income. But those who say they have been through it successfully, also report that it was worth the pain. For now they enjoy health, healthy affection, healthy courage, healthy fears, healthy hates.

Some Christians believe in a comparable process. They call it being born again. That way too is acutely painful. But upon its accomplishment there is a spiritually healthy soul, fit for heaven.

Perhaps a sick nation, like a sick person, can obtain health through an awareness of alternatives, those of the nation's childhood, memories



long suppressed, and the many paths which open into alternate futures. Perhaps for nations as in psychiatry and Christian faith, it is the arduous path that reaches the healing waters.

You'd better run, run, run-a-run,  
You'd better run, run, run-a-run,  
You'd better run to the city of refuge,  
You'd better run, run, -run!

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ISBN: 0-8153-1543-0



LEAMING

HIDDEN AMERICANS  
Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas

ISBN: 0-8153-1543-0

